Access to Oral Health Care for the Residents of Public Housing

Annette Zacharias
Executive Director
National Network for Oral Health Access
What is NNOHA?

• A nationwide network of safety-net oral health providers and their supporters

• Established in 1991 by a group of Dental Directors from Federally Qualified Community Health Centers (FQHCs) who recognized the need for peer-to-peer networking, services, and collaboration to most effectively operate Health Center dental programs.
What is NNOHA?

- **Mission:** “To improve the oral health of underserved populations and contribute to overall health through leadership, advocacy, and support to oral health providers in safety-net systems.”

- Currently about **2,400** individual members
About Health Center
Oral Health Programs

• Health Centers are non-profit clinics that provide high-quality health care services to underserved, low-income individuals with little, or no insurance.

• In 2011:
  ▪ 862 out of 1,128 Health Centers across the country offer dental services (76%).
  ▪ Health Centers provided dental care to 4 million patients. At the same time, Health Centers provided medical care to about 17 million patients (23%).

• Medical capacity exceeds dental capacity in Health Centers
2011 National Public Housing Data

- 61 grantees nationwide
- **187,992** total patients
  - 69,306 patients under 19 (37 %)
  - 109,368 patients ages 19-64 (58 %)
  - 9,318 patients ages 65+ (5 %)
- **43,072** dental patients with 110,488 visits (23%)
- 32.3% of Patients best served in a language other than English
Access Challenges for Residents of Public Housing

- Transportation
- Language
- System navigation

- Public housing residents were more than twice as likely as other city residents not to have had a preventive dental visit in the past 2 years.

*Use of a Population-Based Survey to Describe the Health of Boston Public Housing Residents (2008)*
Insurance Challenges

- Lack of Insurance Options
  - Medicare - Only covers very narrowly defined dental services
  - Medicaid - Most states do not cover routine dental care for adults
Access Strategies

- Adding a dental program
- Local / state resources
- Interprofessional oral health competencies
- Workforce innovations
Starting a Dental Program

• How to Start a Dental Clinic:
  - http://www.nnoha.org/practicemanagement/startclinic.html

• Safety Net Dental Clinic Manual
  - http://www.dentalclinicmanual.com/

• ASTDD Basic Screening Survey for Older Adults Planning and Implementation Packet
State & Local Resources

• Health Centers, FQHC’s and look-alikes
• Dental & Dental Hygiene Schools
• Local Programs
  ▪ Senior Oral Health Project- low-income seniors residing at Boston Housing Authority public housing
  ▪ http://www.bphc.org/programs/cib/chronicdiseases/oralhealth/sohp/Pages/Home.aspx
Local Events

• Mission of Mercy
  ▪ Currently in over 20 states
  ▪ http://www.adcfmom.org/

• Remote Area Medical (RAM):
  ▪ http://www.ramususa.org/services/dental.htm
Interprofessional Competency

• Medical providers screen/access/refer
  ▪ MDs, NP, PAs
  ▪ Oral cancer screenings
  ▪ Early Childhood Caries risk assessment
  ▪ Self management skills
  ▪ Fluoride
Workforce Innovations

- RDH Direct-Access States
- Community Health Corps
- Teledentistry
Health Center Highlight:
Heart of Texas Community Health Center (Waco, TX)

- Public Housing Grantee since 2007
- Targeting children and pregnant women
- Clinic few blocks from one of three Public Housing complexes in Waco
  - Located between the Public Housing complex and local elementary school many children attend
Health Center Highlight: Heart of Texas Community Health Center (Waco, TX)

- Community Health Corps Program
  - 2 navigators stationed at the housing complex to schedule appointments
- Over 80% of children living in Public Housing receive oral health care from HTCHC
- Challenge
  - Better understanding of the importance of oral health care
Health Center Highlight:
San Ysidro Health Center (San Ysidro, CA)

- Free dental screenings and other SYHC medical services at the Public Housing sites or retail sites were Public Housing residents shop
- The San Ysidro Health Center’s “Healthy Steps Mobile Unit” visits Public Housing sites to offer Medical and Oral Health Screenings.
- Referral average to the Dental Department: 90 per month
Health Center Highlight:
San Ysidro Health Center (San Ysidro, CA)

• What is working?
  ▪ Medical Provider at the Mobile Unit personally recommends dental appointment to the patient/parent
  ▪ The patient/parent provided with dental appointment before departure from mobile unit.
  ▪ Free transportation
  ▪ Short appointment wait time

• Challenges
  ▪ Belief oral health not as important as other health needs
  ▪ Lack of knowledge how to navigate CHC systems and sliding fee scale
Contact Us!

Annette Zacharias | NNOHA Executive Director
annette@nnoha.org

National Network for Oral Health Access
181 E. 56th Ave. Suite 501
Denver, CO 80216
Phone: (303) 957-0635
Fax: (866) 316-4995