

Primary Care Providers: A Potential Solution to a Hidden Epidemic

Why Oral Health Matters for Children



Oral disease is the most common, preventable chronic disease among children (1). Low income children under the age of three are especially vulnerable.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Healthy baby teeth are essential to having healthy teeth for life
- Oral disease causes severe pain
- Oral disease prevents children from being able to chew which leads to poor nutrition

CAN PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS HELP?

Absolutely! Primary care providers can make a big difference in the prevention of oral disease for low income children under the age of three who have no where else to go.



"I do think that pediatricians are more important when it comes to children's oral health than dentists because they see kids more often. It's the perfect time to do fluoride varnish and to provide early education." - Key informant

Community Assessment

A community assessment of the oral health needs of low income children under three in Contra Costa County, California was conducted to better understand how primary care providers' could play a more active role in their patients' oral health.

WHY CONTRA COSTA COUNTY?

Access to dental care is nearly impossible for low income children under three in Contra Costa County. Very few dentists will see children so young, and even fewer will see children with Dentif-Cal (2).

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Several key questions guided the project:

- What challenges do providers face that make it difficult to provide preventive oral health services?
- What are caretakers' experiences receiving preventive oral health care from their providers?
- What are other innovative approaches to providing oral health services to low income children besides a medical office?

Preventive oral health includes health education, risk assessments, and fluoride varnish.