

September 2015

Welcome to the third edition of the Vermont Oral Health Coalition newsletter. VOHC newsletters provide updates and information on Coalition activities, emerging oral health issues and activities in Vermont, and oral health in the news nationally.

From the VOHC

VOHC Meeting: Thanks to those of you who were able to attend the VOHC development workshop on 7/17; we made a commitment to having a focused and action-oriented coalition with a streamlined approach (i.e., fewer large group meetings, more small subgroup meetings). Here is the summary of the decisions that were made for the upcoming grant year (9/1/15-8/31/16):

- **Four focus areas were defined.** Subcommittees will concentrate their efforts on a limited and realistic number of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) objectives that they will work towards completing by the end of the grant year. These are the four focus areas:
 - **Pregnant women/young children**, co-chairs: Heather Blair and Dani DeLong
 - **Medical/dental collaboration opportunities**, chairperson: Liz Cote
 - **Community water fluoridation**, chairperson: TBD
 - **Promoting the use of Expanded Functions Dental Auxiliary**, chairperson: Clark Eaton

- **Meeting frequency**

- One Summit (4-hour meeting) in August with a professional facilitator to set our agenda for the coming year (this will start in September 2016, since this was done at our meeting on 7/17/15)
- One "mid-year" meeting in February (WebEx optional) where we check in as a group to network, celebrate success, and troubleshoot challenges
- Subcommittees will meet regularly throughout the year, as determined by the chair or chairs

- **Communication strategy**

- Subcommittee chairs) report updates and progress/meeting minutes to Health Department
- Contractor develops and maintains VOHC website (under development)
- Contractor works with Steering Committee to organize annual summit (next one: September 2016), and mid-year meeting (first one: February 2016).
- Contractor develops quarterly newsletters with input from VOHC members

Thank you very much for your participation in our Vermont Oral Health Coalition; together we can make a difference!

From Around the State

- Two **Oral Health Champion “train the trainer” sessions** were offered in August to educate stakeholders about Community Water Fluoridation and evidence-based best practices to sustain fluoridation at the community level. In the future, trainings may be provided at different locations. All health care providers (medical and dental) are welcome to attend these free trainings.
- The **first Annual Medical/Dental Integration** conference: “Bridging the Divide” will take place at The Essex Resort and Spa in Essex, VT on 11/13/15. Save the date! For more information, click here: <http://www.uvm.edu/medicine/cme/documents/2015BTD-MedicalDentalBrochure.pdf>
- The Department of Vermont Health Access has **initiated a State Plan Amendment to enroll dental hygienists as Medicaid providers**. This will allow hygienists to provide preventive care in public health settings such as nursing homes and schools, increasing access to preventive dental care where it is needed most. These hygienists will be required to maintain a collaborative practice agreement with a supervising dentist on file with the Board of Dental Examiners.
- **Dental providers can be reimbursed for providing tobacco cessation counseling** to patients enrolled in Medicaid. For more information, contact: tobaccoVT@vermont.gov
- The Tooth Tutor School-linked Sealant Program is designed to link children who have not accessed dental care in the previous year with a local dental home. There are open Tooth Tutor positions in Middlebury,

Derby, Bethel, and Brattleboro. Please contact Debora Teixeira if you are interested:

Debora.Teixeira@vermont.gov

- In April 2015, **students at the Village School in North Bennington participated in an Oral Health Presentation**. This was a classroom presentation at Mrs. Elwell's class. Dr. Rob Cauley, Bennington dentist volunteered his time to teach the Kindergarten class about good oral health. Each child was given a new toothbrush, paste and flossers at the end of the presentation. They also learned a song, which they performed with the music teacher Mrs. Koelker.

Click the link below to watch the video (thanks, Lisa Kazazean and BOHC for the contribution!):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVXcroOvUZI>



In collaboration with the Southern VT Medical Center and the **Bennington Oral Health Coalition**, sidewalk chalk was used to reach 650 students entering middle school



Armen Kazazean, Nevin Lessard (AmeriCorps VISTA), and Gavin Rawson working on the sugar conversions of Rethink Your Drink

From Around the Nation

This article appeared in the latest New England Rural Health RoundTable Newsletter; way to go, Sherry and team!

Smiles for Seniors: Ottauquechee Health Foundation Offers Free Oral Health Screenings and Fluoride Varnish for Older Adults



Sherry and colleagues from Dartmouth-Hitchcock, the Vermont Oral Health Coalition and Alice Peck Day Community Health brainstormed the idea of a "preventative" model of care for older adults. Needs assessments clearly show the gap in access to oral health care. So, the reasoning was to develop a program that makes it easier for older adults to access dental care.

In the first weeks of the program, alternating between the White River Junction and Woodstock centers, 17 seniors participated. The hygienist offers a dry brushing, fluoride varnishing application, and screening for oral cancer. A relationship of trust is established and if problems are identified that require a visit to the dentist or to a dental clinic, the hygienist coordinates the visit.



Older adults with dentures are also welcome to take part in the pilot program. Again, the hygienist can assess the condition of the dentures - do they fit properly so the person is able to enjoy a balanced diet? Many seniors suffer from poor nutrition precisely because of ill-fitting dentures.

Sherry pointed out that Medicaid patients in Vermont are eligible for \$510/per year in dental coverage, a benefit she says many people are not aware of. New Hampshire offers a limited benefit for adult Medicaid patients and Medicare does not cover any dental expenses.

For more information, contact the Ottauquechee Health Foundation at 802-457-4188 or ohf@sover.net



Update from the Vermont Oral Health Care for All Coalition

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) voted on August 7th to implement the national education standards for dental therapy training programs they adopted last February. The vote means dentistry's accrediting body fully recognizes dental therapy as a profession and will move forward with accrediting dental therapy training institutions - possibly within the next year.

With recognition from CODA, dental therapy education programs like the one in development at Vermont Technical College have the standards they need to train dental therapists. VTC President Dan Smith was pleased to hear of the ruling, saying, "Vermont Technical College is ready to educate dental therapists to meet the oral health needs of underserved Vermonters. CODA accreditation will allow our students to access financial aid and join the dental workforce in a profession recognized by the national accreditation agency."

Several members of the VT Oral Health Care for All coalition had the opportunity to visit Minnesota this summer to see dental therapists in action and hear about the results of their first 5 years in practice. The data is clear: Dental therapists have improved access to care for underserved Minnesotans. The profession has proven to generate positive economic impact by controlling costs and creating workforce opportunities so that people can live, train and provide needed care in their own communities.

Please contact Michelle Fay at Voices for Vermont's Children (mfay@voicesforvtkids.org) for more information or to get involved in the VT Oral Health Care for All Coalition.

Oral Health in the News

- **Grant program aims to provide oral health care to underserved people facing substance abuse issues.** People with drug problems don't often come to mind as an underserved population regarding health care. Yet, because of their substance abuse issues, they often go without essential medical services, particularly when it comes to caring for their teeth and other oral tissues. Story continues here: <http://www.news-medical.net/news/20150807/Grant-program-aims-to-provide-oral-health-care-to-underserved-people-facing-substance-abuse-issues.aspx>
- **Sugary drinks a public and oral health concern.** There has been a lot of chatter about the impact of sugary drinks (soda, fruit juice, energy drinks) and obesity. Latinos and African-Americans are more likely to consume sugar-sweetened beverages on a daily basis compared to whites. What about oral health? Read the full story here: http://www.dailycamera.com/guest-opinions/ci_28623809/deborah-l-foote-sugary-drinks-public-oral-health-concern

- **Poor oral health tied to school absences.** Dental problems caused more than 30 percent of students to miss time in the classroom, according to a new survey. Read the full story: <http://blogs.columbian.com/healthbeat/2015/07/23/poor-oral-health-tied-to-school-absences/>
- **Study examines 7 states' decision to increase coverage for Medicaid adult dental benefits.** The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) recently conducted studies across seven states (California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington) on the issue of dental Medicaid—each of the seven states has taken recent action on adding, enhancing, or reinstating Medicaid dental benefits for adults. More information here: <http://www.dentistryiq.com/articles/2015/07/study-examines-7-states-decision-to-increase-coverage-for-medicaid-adult-dental-benefits.html>
- **A Killer Toothache: How U.S. Dental Care Became a National Emergency.** An excellent overview on the current oral health scenario in the U.S. along with some insight into the politics behind those issues. Read the full article: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nisarg-patel/a-killer-toothache-how-us-dental-care-became-a-national-emergency_b_7835660.html