

**ORAL HEALTH SERVICES IN
NEW YORK STATE'S UPPER HUDSON REGION**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2008--2010**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEVELOPED THROUGH THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS OF:

Adirondack Rural Health Network
Doral Dental
Glens Falls Hospital – Pediatric Mobile Dental Van
Greater Adirondack Perinatal Network
Hudson Falls Central School District
Hudson Headwaters Health Network
Hudson Mohawk Area Health Education Center
Inter-Lakes Health Dental Clinic
New York State Department of Health
Warren County Head Start
Warren County Health Services
Washington County Head Start/Early Head Start and Child Care Programs
Washington County Public Health
and
Local Consumer Advocates

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF:

The Council of Community Services of New York State, Inc.

PLANNING THROUGH COLLABORATION

Poor oral health is associated with poor general health, putting individuals at greater risk for stroke, diabetes, and heart disease. The connection between oral health and general health supports the need for good oral health care as an essential component of health programs and policies. Disparities in oral health that have been documented in the national population are also apparent in New York State. Some populations face multiple barriers to acquiring good oral health, including children and the elderly, disabled populations, pregnant women, individuals living in poverty, and residents of rural communities.

A regional community health assessment of the rural upper Hudson region of New York State was completed in 2004 and 2007 under the auspices of the Adirondack Rural Health Network (ARHN). Encompassing Essex, Fulton, Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington counties, the assessment identified increasing access to oral health services as one of four priority health concerns in the area. The household phone survey of 2060 area residents conducted as part of the assessment process found that:

- 23% of households have a child who has not received an oral health exam outside of school;
- One-half of adults do not have dental insurance;
- 26% of adults are not getting the dental care they think they need; and
- 34% of adults have not seen a dentist in the past year.

In 2005, the New York State Department of Health published an Oral Health Plan for New York State that recommended the establishment of regional oral health networks to identify prevention opportunities and plan for improved access to dental care in their communities. In response to this call for action, the Adirondack Rural Health Network and the Washington County Head Start/Early Head Start and Child Care Programs announced a partnership in 2007 with the goal of developing a comprehensive strategic plan to address the oral health challenges facing individuals in the upper Hudson region.

As a first step in the planning process, a broad range of community health and dental care providers and health care planners were invited to participate in a forum to assess the current status of oral health in the region and lay the foundation for the regional oral health network. Following the forum, several participants volunteered to form a work group to develop the strategic plan. Utilizing a traditional strategic planning process, the work group partners completed the assessment of the status of the current service system, developed a vision for the future delivery of dental services in the upper Hudson region, and recommended goals and strategies for achieving that vision.

COLLABORATIVE VISION

We envision a comprehensive service system that promotes and sustains the oral health of residents throughout the Upper Hudson region of New York State. The system will be characterized by:

- *Dental services that are easily accessible to all individuals throughout the region;*
- *Wide scale access to research based prevention and education;*

- *Community understanding and support for the importance of oral health practices in maintaining and enhancing health;*
- *Recruitment and retention of a high quality work force through ongoing support for dental services providers and adequate reimbursement;*
- *Integration of dental services with the health care continuum throughout the life span; and*
- *Ongoing planning to sustain the service system.*

COMMUNITY ORAL HEALTH GOALS

Fourteen service goals were developed to address the six key issue areas identified in the vision statement:

1. Expand the availability of clinic services throughout the region.
2. Reduce the barriers that limit access to dental services.
3. Increase access to information about dental service availability.
4. Make prevention strategies identified as best practices readily available to all segments of the population.
5. Strengthen the ability of existing personnel (e.g. WIC, Head Start, community health workers, etc.) to train high risk populations in basic oral health prevention practices.
6. Design and implement a community wide prevention campaign.
7. Increase local policy makers' support for oral health prevention measures.
8. Increase the scope of services that can be provided by mid-level oral health providers (i.e. dental hygienists).
9. Increase awareness of local youth about career opportunities in oral health.
10. Create incentives that support recruitment and retention efforts.
11. Expand the services available in regional health centers to include dental services.
12. Increase the co-location of health and dental services throughout the region.
13. Increase medical providers' understanding of the impact of oral health on overall health.
14. Sustain the operation of the oral health coalition.
15. Monitor implementation of the strategic plan and assess the impact on the region's oral health status.

NEXT STEPS

The oral health partnership that developed through the preparation of the strategic plan will be renamed the "Smile Coalition" and will continue to work collectively toward the plan's implementation. A 2008 work plan has been developed to focus efforts throughout the upcoming year. Progress will be monitored by the Adirondack Rural Health Network and the work plan will be updated annually.