



Kentucky Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Oral Health: A Key Component for Kentuckian's Overall Health

52 Weeks of Public Health Spotlight: Kentucky Oral Health Program



Released October 11, 2017



FRANKFORT, Ky. (October 11, 2017) – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is honoring the Kentucky Oral Health Program in recognition of National Dental Hygiene Month.

The Kentucky Oral Health Program has a long and proud history of working with local health departments, dental hygienists, health educators and dentists throughout the state to educate Kentuckians about the importance of oral health and its link to one's overall health. When Kentucky established an oral health program in 1928, it was the 3rd state in the country to have a public dental health program. One of the program's major efforts is water fluoridation. In 1951, the city of Maysville become the first Kentucky community to fluoridate its water supply. Today, Kentucky is a national leader with 96% of citizens having a fluoridated water.

The Oral Health Program consists of 11 public health dental hygiene teams providing services in 28 Kentucky counties. These teams visit local schools to assess, clean and apply fluoride varnish and sealants to a child's molars. The fluoride varnish provides protectants for 6 months, and the sealants protect the chewing surface for the length of the sealant, which typically protects the

surface of the teeth from decay. The program has steadily grown over the last few years and becoming positively received by local communities and stakeholders. With a deficit of dental providers in some of Kentucky's rural communities, this program fulfills a vital need with a mission to refer every child to a local dentist.

“We are working not only with our heads and hands, but with our hearts. We have been touched by all of the children and unreal circumstances we come across. Our work is not only helping children in Kentucky, but also changing each of us for the better,” says the Kentucky Public Health Dental Hygiene Team about the work they provide for Kentuckians.

The public health dental hygiene teams have served approximately 25,000 Kentucky children providing 175,000 preventive dental services including oral hygiene instruction, dental risk assessment, patient education, nutrition counseling, tobacco counseling, varnish and sealants. These individuals embrace the needs of local communities to assure children can grow and learn without the distraction of poor dental health. If a child is in pain or cannot eat due to poor dental health, they cannot learn and grown to become healthy, productive Kentucky citizens.

On Saturday, October 7, the Oral Health Program was recognized at the [Kentucky Dental Hygienists' Association](#) Public Health Symposium for being a trailblazer in the area of public dental health. The event was a continuing education that consisted of a panel discussion centered on the important work health department hygienists do within Kentucky communities.

Interested in learning more about healthy Kentucky lifestyle? Through our 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health will spotlight public health issues as well as highlight services and resources available to Kentuckians statewide. Follow us on [Facebook](#) for your weekly tip.