

Grant Outcomes Report

Using a Mobile Dental Clinic to Deliver Basic Dental Services in Nassau and Suffolk Counties

The Problem:

In 2009, approximately 250,000 residents of Nassau and Suffolk Counties were uninsured and living at incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. In addition, many of those who did have health insurance, including the Medicare population, did not have dental benefits. For the elderly and others who are at low-income levels, lack of dental insurance creates a significant barrier to receiving oral health services. Access to dental care in these Counties is further exacerbated by a lack of dental programs offering affordable fees based on income levels and/or accepting Medicaid.

Lack of appropriate dental care can worsen effects of dental caries and gum disease, cause nutritional deficiencies, and alter self-image. Poor oral health has also been linked to systemic conditions, such as poor outcomes of pregnancy among expectant mothers, exacerbation of diabetes, and heart disease in untreated adults.

Grant Activities & Outcomes:

This project attempted to integrate oral health with systemic health by identifying high-risk populations who lack dental care, and delivering basic dental services to these populations using a Mobile Dental Clinic. Prior to receiving the NYSHealth grant, United Way of Long Island and Long Island Jewish Medical Center's Department of Dentistry secured \$424,350 in funding to purchase and outfit a mobile dental unit. The NYSHealth grant supported program development activities and initial implementation of services.

United Way spent the first year on start-up activities: recruiting and credentialing staff, setting up systems, disseminating marketing flyers, and developing policy and procedures manuals. Patient services commenced in January 2008, approximately six months behind schedule.

KEY INFORMATION:

GRANTEE

United Way of Long Island

GRANT TITLE

Mobile Dental Services for At-Risk Populations

DATES

January 1, 2007–March 16, 2010

GRANT AMOUNT

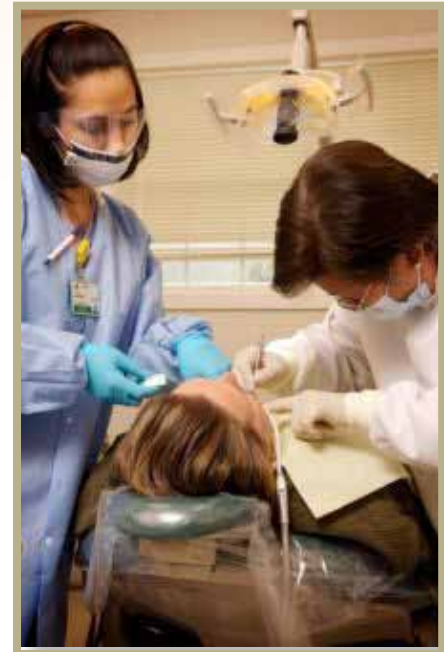
\$979,637

FUNDING

2006 Open RFP

The initial proposal suggested that once program operations were underway, up to 30 diagnostic and treatment visits per day could be provided, or a total of 5,000 to 7,000 annual visits. However, clinical personnel realized that counting the number of procedures would be a better way to measure the impact of services provided. Over its 18 months of operation, 5,103 procedures were performed within 2,086 patient visits.

In the pediatric population, an ethnically diverse population was served by the project: 50% Hispanic, 21% African-American, 5% Asian, 8% other, and 16% white. Nineteen percent of the population used interpreter services. Specialty referrals were generated for 12% of pediatric visitors. Comprehensive dental care was provided for the majority of children seen. Of the 772 patient records analyzed, at least 28% of the children between one and five years of age presented at least one decayed tooth. Due to a high rate of out migration of families, follow-up with patients to assess the impact of their initial treatment was difficult. United Way was able to assess a limited number of cases; though the results must be interpreted with caution, they showed a statistically significant reduction in the number of decayed teeth between initial and recall visits.



The Mobile Dental Clinic also served a number of Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) residents. Among the NORC residents treated, 60% were white, 4% Asian, and 3% other; the rest were undocumented. Most NORC residents were over 60 years of age, and 23% had removable or fixed oral prosthesis. Referrals generated from the NORC site were as high as 32% for prosthetic treatment, which suggests that mobile units are not a viable option for adult comprehensive care as a lone standing entity.

The Future:

By the close of the grant, the Department of Dentistry was working closely with senior administration to try to sustain the project. No definitive plan had been developed at that point, but they were continuing to pursue opportunities to partner with local governments and community-based agencies. Securing ongoing funds for a project of this nature has proven difficult and its long-term sustainability is unclear.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ABOUT THE GRANTEE

United Way of Long Island, together with its community partners, invests in and develops programs that address Long Islanders' education, income/financial stability, and health needs. United Way is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization run by an independent volunteer board of directors.

GRANTEE CONTACT

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