

**REPORT TO THE TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISTURE**

**STATE OF HAWAII**

**2010**

**PURSUANT TO SECTION 321-63,  
HAWAII REVISED STATUTES, REQUIRING  
THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO  
SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT ON  
DENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES,  
EXPENDITURES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PREPARED BY:  
STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
NOVEMBER, 2009**

## **Executive Summary**

The Dental Health Division is the sole dental public health agency in the State of Hawaii. Program responsibilities include community health assessment, planning for effective public health interventions and helping to assure access to necessary dental treatment services for vulnerable Hawaii residents.

While Hawaii has a relatively high concentration of practicing dentists, we continue to have limited access to basic dental care for persons with disabilities and adults dependent upon Medicaid and Medicare for assistance with health care expenses. This problem is most acute for medically fragile individuals, including residents of long-term care facilities and persons with behavioral problems related to chronic mental illness or developmental disabilities. While the problem may be most obvious on the neighbor islands, all islands have limited resources for dealing with the dental care needs of special needs populations. In addition, access to basic dental care has been further restricted with the elimination of all but a limited panel of emergency dental services for Medicaid eligible adults which went into effect August, 2009.

In working towards the development of consensus strategies to help address the long-standing oral health problems affecting our communities, the Department of Health facilitates and actively participates on the Hawaiian Islands Oral Health Task Force. Through this collaboration of private for-profit, non-profit and State government dental care providers, funders, and dental insurance industry representatives, we are hopeful that oral health care delivery can be enhanced and access to basic dental disease prevention and treatment services will be improved.

Contributing to a high demand for accessible dental care is the fact that children in Hawaii continue to exhibit among the highest rates of dental caries in the nation. Dental caries or “tooth decay” is the most prevalent chronic disease affecting children nationally. Caries is an insidious and progressive disease process which can put children and adults at risk for potentially life-threatening infection. The health impact of tooth decay, periodontal (gum) disease and other oral diseases is apparent to most people. The social impact, including the high rates of missed school and work days due to chronic oral disease, the stigma associated with poor dental condition, the general wellness and health risks associated with chronic oral infection and the public and private expense of dental disease, is less so.

The November 2009 reduction-in-force eliminated 11 of the Division's 25 personnel who were performing school-based dental screening and referral, classroom-based dental education and disease prevention programs Statewide. The reduction-in-force resulted in the elimination of the Division's Dental Hygiene Branch. We are hopeful that the Department of Education will be capable of sustaining an activity which helps minimize the negative impact of chronic oral disease known to be highly prevalent among young children Statewide.

**Report to the Legislature Pursuant to Section 321-63, Hawaii Revised Statutes,  
Requiring the Department of Health to Submit an Annual report on  
Dental Health Activities, Expenditures and Recommendations**

**Program Objectives:**

To promote oral health and reduce the incidence and severity of problems associated with oral diseases and abnormalities through preventive programs targeting young children and treatment programs targeting persons with severe chronic disabilities, and by increasing public awareness and professional education.

**Program Activities:**

New methods of preventing and controlling dental diseases are evaluated, and if feasible, proposed for implementation as public health programming.

**1) Dental care services**

Dental care services are provided by program personnel to patients housed at Hawaii State institutions, including Hawaii State Hospital on Oahu and Kalaupapa Nursing Facility on Molokai as well as to community-based clients at the Department's regional mental health centers. Treatment services are provided primarily to indigent, developmentally disabled, mentally ill and medically fragile Hawaii residents. Over the past three years, the Division treated an average of 2,240 needy individuals and performed over 15,200 dental procedures annually.

**2) Prevention Activities**

Training: Training is provided statewide on oral health risks and risk management and appropriate oral hygiene practices to assist disabled persons. Training is provided for teachers, caregivers, and other health care providers. Annual training is required for staff providing care for persons residing in State-licensed long-term care facilities.

Education: During FY 2009, Dental Hygiene Branch staff had direct contact with over 43,000 people at 240 sites statewide through 2,093 educational presentations on oral health care. The Branch's dental hygienists had contact with community groups such as public and private schools, preschools, private schools, senior centers, parent-child programs, and populations at-risk for substance abuse, delinquency, and truancy, etc.

Oral health screening and topical fluoride applications: More than 9,108 public school students in grades K-12 statewide were screened for dental problems. Referrals for urgent or acute dental treatment were made for 2,477 students. Topical fluoride to reduce the incidence and severity of tooth decay was applied to 7,847 students in selected grades on Oahu and Molokai. Fluoride mouth rinse programs have been implemented in selected schools on Kauai, Lanai, and Maui through a partnership of personnel from the Dental Hygiene Branch and volunteers from the school community, including school administrators, teachers and parents.

### **3) Collaborations**

Division staff work with other State and private agency personnel in the coordination of programs designed to enhance community dental health. These programs include but are not limited to: Honolulu Community Action Program; Hawaii Head Start Association; Healthy Start; Women, Infants and Children (WIC); University of Hawaii School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene; John A. Burns School of Medicine Maternal and Child Health Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Project (MCH LEND); University of Hawaii affiliated medical residency programs; The Queen's Medical Center General Practice Dental Residency program; Kapiolani and Maui Community College Dental Assisting Programs; Life Foundation; Pacific Basin Dental Association; Hawaii Dental Association; Papa Ola Lokahi; Hawaii Special Olympics; Crime Victims Compensation Commission; Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; Department of Public Safety; and the Department of Human Services.

#### **Plans to Meet Its Objectives:**

The Division Administration and Hospital and Community Dental Services Branch (HCDSB) will be able to fulfill their clinical program objectives. Comprehensive oral health services will be provided to many of the most needy and vulnerable in our community. Currently, the Division provides treatment services to this population on Oahu. The Division lacks the capability to provide direct clinical services on other islands. Critical problems requiring surgical intervention are addressed by transporting clients at Medicaid program expense to Honolulu for treatment by Division personnel or at The Queen's Medical Center Dental Residency Program for hospital-based dental services.

**Program Performance:**

The Dental Hygiene Branch designed and executed programs taking into consideration each school's and community group's needs. Programs within the Department of Health and Department of Human Services that have federal grant-related oral health performance standards collaborated with the Dental Hygiene Branch to be in compliance with oral health performance requirements. These programs included the Maternal & Child Health Branch, WIC, and Head Start.

The Dental Health Division was integral in planning and developing Hawaii State Hospital's oral health policies and procedures. Due to the Hospital and Community Dental Services Branch's ongoing comprehensive dental care of Hawaii State Hospital patients and the Dental Hygiene Branch's oral health education for residents and staff, the hospital fulfilled The Joint Commission accreditation standards that addressed preventive, urgent, and comprehensive dental treatment services and oral health education.

Persons who are medically indigent, have chronic and severe mental and/or developmental disabilities, and persons affected by HIV/AIDS often experience difficulty accessing needed care from private sector dental providers. They receive oral surgery, preventive, restorative, prosthodontic and endodontic dental care from Hospital and Community Dental Services Branch staff at State-operated dental clinics located in regional mental health centers on Oahu.

**Problems and Issues Encountered by the Program:****Access to dental services**

Medicaid recipients, other low income residents and medically compromised individuals have limited access to dental care through private sector dental care providers. As of August, 2009 Medicaid recipients have dental benefits limited to emergencies only. Patients with acute access barriers are referred to the Dental Health Division by State and federal government, public health, and social service agencies, and private sector health care providers for treatment services.

The Department does not operate dental clinics on the neighbor islands. Access to even emergency dental care to relieve pain and infection is limited.

While a variety of community surveys have shown that the rates of dental insurance coverage and utilization

of care are relatively high statewide, there is definitely a need for additional pediatric dental specialists and general dentists trained and willing to provide routine care for young children and for adults with complex disabilities. This includes the need for hospital-based care for some individuals. The development of a system for hospital-based dental services is contingent upon the availability of dentists trained and experienced in hospital dentistry, the availability of adequately equipped and supplied surgical suites and the active support of hospital administrators, hospital staff and anesthesiology personnel.

The capacity of Hawaii's system of community health center dental clinics is limited, resulting in difficulties in addressing the needs of young children and persons with complex disabilities.

**Program Recommendations:**

The Division will continue to work and collaborate with State and federal agencies, social service providers and private sector dental and other health care providers to assure they are aware of the problems faced by underserved populations in accessing dental treatment services.

The Division will continue to work with State agencies to assure that public assistance programs designed to address oral health problems are administered to maximize access to necessary emergency and basic dental services in all communities and assure cost-efficiency.

The Division will continue to work towards the development of a Oral Health Center of Excellence; which encompasses a coordinated activity which targets: 1) professional development and the expansion of local resources capable of providing dental care for disabled Hawai`i residents, 2) targeted preventive and community health activities, 3) the development and implementation of effective and cost-efficient public policy which maximizes local dollars and, 4) appropriate case management and clinical services delivery in assuring the availability of accessible basic dental care.

**Expenditures and Encumbrances for FY 2009**  
**(MBPE02-A as of June 30, 2009)**

|                               |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>(pos'n ct.)</b>            | (25.00)        |
| <b>Personal Services</b>      | 1,420,015      |
| <b>Other Current Expenses</b> | <u>362,089</u> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | (25.00)        |
| <b>General Fund</b>           | 1,782,104      |

Expenditure information from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.