

SMILEmobile: A Dental Clinic Serving Urban and Rural Children

Case for Action:

- Oral health is a major health problem for children living in communities of poverty.
- 2000: The first Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, issued by U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D. described dental and oral diseases as an epidemic disproportionately affecting America's poor
- Tooth decay impacts academic performance, a leading cause of absenteeism
- Children nationwide miss almost 52 million school hours each year because of dental problems
- Tooth decay is the single most prevalent chronic childhood disease

Description:

- Since 1967 The *SMILEmobile* Program, a dental offices on wheels:
 - Brings oral health services to children who would otherwise not have access to dental care
 - Includes 4 mobile dental units, each staffed with a dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant and clinical coordinator
 - Dentists, hygienists and dental residents provide comprehensive oral healthcare for children and teens including x-rays, cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, restorations, stainless steel crowns and simple extractions

Partners:

- Eastman Dental Center
- Community collaborators such as the Rochester City School District, Head Start
- Monroe County Dental Society

Outcomes:

- Regular, accessible, affordable and convenient dental services allow children to maintain good oral health and prevent needless pain, suffering and health care expenses because of geographic isolation or poverty.
- *SMILEmobiles* have helped more than 39,000 children access much needed oral health preventive and restorative services
- Each year, mobile units provide services to 3,700 children and teens at 15 inner city schools, 8 Head Start programs, and 3 remote rural locations.
- 40% of children who attend a *SMILEmobile* school have dental sealants, as compared to 19% of children who attend a non-*SMILEmobile* school. This early intervention has a significant impact on preventing tooth decay.
- *SMILEmobiles* have a profound effect on missed school time, with most schools experiencing a ten-fold decrease in absenteeism due to dental problems
- Participating schools have reported that the program has increased school performance of its students.

Contact Information:

Holly Barone
Administrator, Eastman Dental Center
625 Elmwood Avenue, Box 683
Rochester, NY 14642
(585) 273-1953