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.
- 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.

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