



Evaluation of the Long Term Care Oral Health Program

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An Aggregate Report: Three North Dakota Long Term Care Facilities

The Center for Rural Health (CRH) at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences was contracted by the North Dakota Department of Health Oral Health Program (DoH OHP) to complete pre/post assessments for long term care (LTC) facilities participating in a mobile oral health program. This evaluation was funded by the DentaQuest Foundation.

Three facilities participated in assessments in the spring of 2016 and the fall of 2017. The assessments sought to understand the barriers to providing oral health services in a LTC setting, while also evaluating the effectiveness of the LTC mobile oral health program. Participants included administrators, directors of nursing/unit charge nurses, and direct care staff. Facility names have been removed. If you would like more information or have a request for additional data points, please contact Dr. Shawnda Schroeder at shawnda.schroeder@med.und.edu.

Key Findings

In 2016, 238 surveys were completed among the three participating LTC facilities. In 2017, 189 surveys were completed. A majority of respondents in both years were certified nursing assistants (CNAs). A majority of respondents (71% in 2016 and 72% in 2017) were located at one of the three participating facilities.

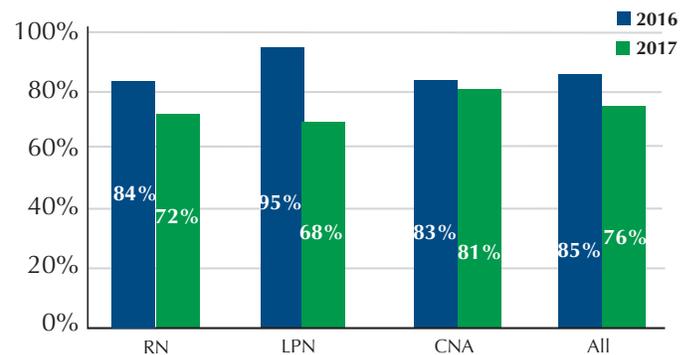
- Between 2016 and 2017, there was very little variation in perceived impact of the program.
- In both 2016 and 2017, staff (97%) indicated that oral health was considered a priority of daily resident care.
- Overall, satisfaction with how oral hygiene needs of residents were being met within the facility increased slightly from 2016-2017; however, in 2016, 85% already indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied.
- During 2017, a smaller percentage of staff agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved access to oral health services for nursing home residents when compared to 2016 responses.

- During 2016 and 2017, dental care training was provided for LTC staff; however, respondents disagreed on the availability of oral hygiene training for residents.
- In both years, a large percentage of staff indicated they did not know who was responsible for the oral health assessment upon admission of a new resident. Of those who did respond, the unit charge nurse or registered nurse (RN) were identified most frequently; not a member of the dental team.
- The unit charge nurses and CNAs were the two providers identified as primarily responsible for the day-to-day coordination of a resident's daily dental care plan during 2016 and 2017.
- A majority of respondents (86% in 2016, 84% in 2017) had not heard of the Smiles for Life curriculum provided at no cost by the North Dakota DoH OHP.

Access to Dental Care

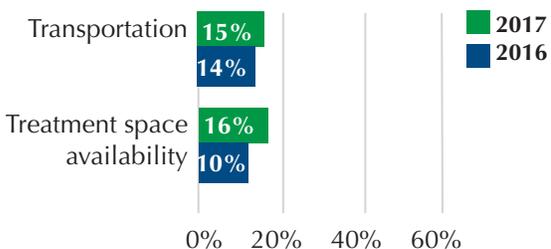
Generally, a majority of respondents agreed that facility participation in the program improved dental care access for residents. However, during 2017 a smaller percentage of RNs and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) agreed there was improved access to care. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Percentage of LTC Providers who Agree/Strongly Agree Participation in the Program Improved Dental Access for LTC Residents: 2016-2017



Although a majority of the staff were unaware as to whether their facility had a list of dental providers for resident referral, 95% of those who did respond indicated that a referral list was available in both 2016 and 2017. Both transportation and availability of suitable dental treatment space are cited as barriers to dental care access in the literature. However, they were not identified as moderate or serious barriers among those facilities participating in this mobile program.

Figure 2. Percentage of LTC Providers Identifying Each Barrier as a Moderate/Serious Problem: 2016-2017

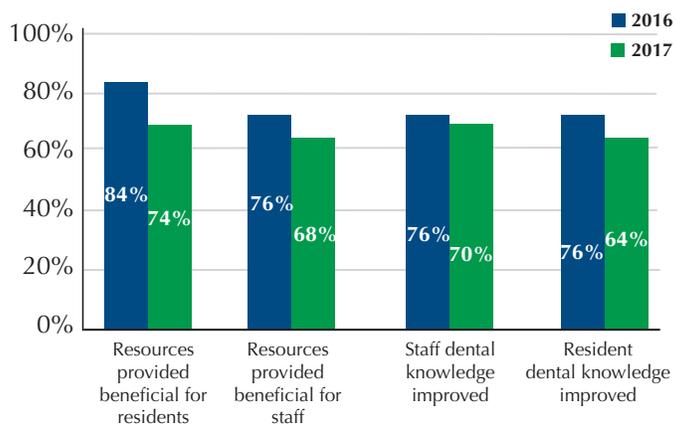


Oral Health Resources and Knowledge

Roughly 78% of staff in both 2016 and 2017 indicated their respective facilities offered oral health training for staff with an additional 10% stating it was available upon request. Conversely, only about 31% believed there were educational sessions available for residents on the importance of good oral health.

Although more than half of those surveyed in both years agreed or strongly agreed that the program led to beneficial resources for staff and residents and improved knowledge and awareness of oral health, the percentage of those in agreement declined from 2016 to 2017. See Figure 3.

Figure 2. Percentage of LTC Providers who Agree/Strongly Agree with Resource Impact: 2016-2017



Smiles for Life Curriculum

Smiles for Life is a free, online oral health training curriculum provided through the North Dakota DoH OHP. Healthcare providers may take advantage of this training to develop knowledge about a variety of oral healthcare issues. The online training includes the courses: geriatric oral health; adult oral health; the oral examination; the relationship of oral to systemic health; and acute dental problems, among others. Though available and shared with LTC administrators in the state, 86% of care staff in 2016 and 84% in 2017 indicated they had not heard of the Smiles for Life curriculum. Learn more about Smiles for Life at oral.health.nd.gov/resources/for-health-professionals/.

Providing Dental Care

In both years, staff indicated that the unit charge nurse or RN, not a member of the dental team, were the individuals primarily responsible for completing the oral health assessment upon admission of a new resident. Coordination of a resident's daily oral healthcare plan was most commonly identified as the responsibility of the CNA or the unit charge nurse. However, 1/3 of CNAs surveyed indicated they did not know who was responsible for coordinating residents' daily oral care plans. Recognizing that dental exams were being completed by nursing home providers, and not members of a dental team, and that there was lack of knowledge regarding who was responsible for coordinating daily oral care plans, the state DoH OHP funded the CRH to work with nursing home and dental stakeholders to develop a standard dental screening tool for nursing home residents. Implementation of this tool will foster dental and nursing home collaborations and improve the oral health of nursing home residents. The *Standardized Dental Screening for New Nursing Home Residents: A Promising Practice Guide* is available at ruralhealth.und.edu/what-we-do/oral-health/publications.

For more information

Visit the CRH webpage for additional oral health publications and information. ruralhealth.und.edu/what-we-do/oral-health

Shawnda Schroeder, PhD

701.777.0787 • shawnda.schroeder@med.und.edu

Center for Rural Health

University of North Dakota

School of Medicine & Health Sciences

1301 North Columbia Road, Stop 9037, Suite E231

Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037

701.777.3848

ruralhealth.und.edu