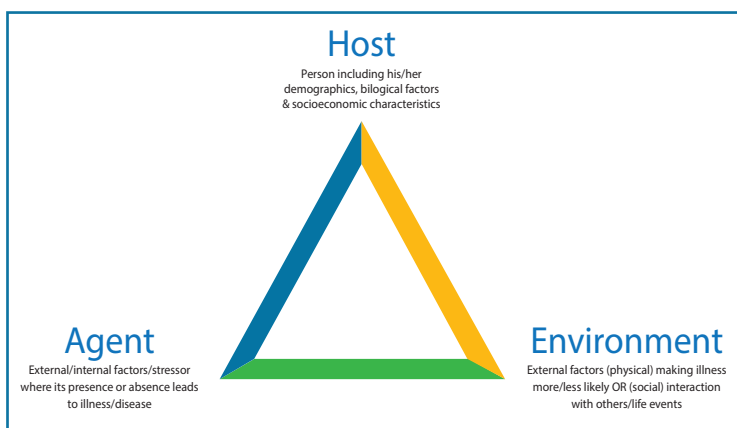




Oral Health Education Program Guide Book

NCOHF believes everyone plays a role in the prevention of tooth decay, or cavities, which is the #1 chronic childhood disease in the US. As part of our Oral Health Education Program (OHEP), we provide this project book to help those wanting to create dental health projects in their school and/or community. Using the public health model (host, agent, environment), NCOHF believes we can address individual behaviors by changing beliefs, but also impacting the environment in which people are making decisions.

The Public Health Model



For those seeking to design a dental health project, a place to start is often hard to find. The intent of this guide is to spark interest in the issue of oral health and your creativity is always welcome. NCOHF wants to help you go the extra mile in helping children understand more about why they should take care of their teeth. In doing so, we hope you increase their understanding of the importance of dental health, while also changing behaviors and the environments where these behavior choices take place—classrooms, cafeterias, schools, and the like. This will be discussed more as we move through the three categories of activities:

1. Changing Beliefs

Activities to change beliefs are often about building awareness or providing basic education. While important, they may not create long-lasting change. Examples: Dental health education in schools or uncovering community data related to dental health access in a poster session.

2. Changing Behavior

Activities seeking to change behavior may be a bit more complex, but often include programming making it simpler for certain behaviors to occur or not occur (depends on the desired outcome). Examples: Establishing brushing programs in elementary schools or holding a water demonstration in a school cafeteria.

3. Changing the Environment

Activities seeking to change the environment are typically the most complex, but they also may create lifelong behavioral change effecting many people. Examples: Removing sugar-sweetened beverages from school grounds or ensuring all students have a water bottle and access to free, clean drinking water on campus.

Choose a mix of activities from the lists or make up your own to make dental health and wellness interesting and FUN!!!

Changing Beliefs: Start a New Conversation about Oral Health

Oral health advocates can start helping others learn by doing their own research and documentation on what their peers, family, school, and community knows or perceives about oral health. If you want to create change, you first should understand the existing problems. Ways to get started in learning about your school/community may include the following:

- Check with your local health department for oral health statistics. Many communities have limited data on the subject, but it is at least good to know where you are starting from. Ask for information on things like the number of children with untreated tooth decay (or cavities) by age or the number of times children in a certain age range visit the dentist each year.
- Conduct a brief survey with youth, parents/caregivers, and others to learn about their daily oral health habits (i.e., when do they brush, how often, do they floss daily, how often do they see the dentist, etc.).
- Upon gathering current information, conduct a presentation on what you learned to help raise awareness of the issues of oral health and wellness.

Activities to Change Beliefs

- Create a social media campaign with a special hashtag & information related to oral health in your community
- Design posters, flyers, & fact sheets on children's dental health in your school/community
- Document school nutrition information & how it may affect oral health
- Determine if there are food deserts in your community & document how these affect oral health
- Research & document if your community experiences a dental health professional shortage
- Research & document if your community's water source contains fluoride
- Document the availability of free drinking water in your school vs. the availability of other drink choices (i.e., juice, soda, sports drinks, etc.)
- Conduct a demonstration of how oral health is connected to other health issues (i.e., heart health, diabetes, obesity, etc.)
- Start a "health club" at your school/community center to increase oral and overall health & wellness



Changing Behaviors: Knowing Better Means Doing Better

Taking oral health education and awareness a step further, advocates can help peers, family members, and the community begin to change their behaviors related to their own oral health and wellness. When people know better, they can do better! By simply increasing oral health education through changing beliefs, we can begin to help people change their behaviors.

An example of changing a behavior is creating a tooth brushing program in an elementary school. Ensuring children have a toothbrush and toothpaste at school ensures they will brush their teeth at least once a day, and hopefully by lunchtime, that would be the second brushing. The behavior is changed because the program is in place providing education on proper brushing technique along with the tools to make it happen (a toothbrush and toothpaste).

Activities to Change Behaviors

- Start a backpack stuffing program to include nutritious food & new dental hygiene supplies for students in need
- Conduct a #WaterWednesday demonstration in your school/ community with naturally flavored water (using fresh fruit, veggies & herbs)
- Conduct a tooth-friendly food demonstration in your school/ community showing the effects of sticky and non-sticky foods on teeth
- Promote water bottle distribution for all youth in a school/ community center with access to free drinking water
- Establish a bullying prevention program (many youth with poor dental health are also bullied)



Changing the Environment: Making Positive Choices Easier

Change is never easy, but the long-term impact of environmental change is lasting. “Environmental change” is defined as changing systems, structures, regulations and rules effecting whole populations or segments of a community. When we can create change within the environment where someone lives, works and plays, we may change his/her choices. NCOHF believes advocates can begin to uncover current understanding and local conditions to change beliefs (raise awareness), start to move the needle on behavioral change, and eventually have significant impact on the environments we all live in (e.g., schools, community, home, etc.).

Activities to Change the Environment

- Host a Smile Drive (see page 6) to collect dental care products for donation to a local organization serving children & families in need
- Plant a Smile Garden to source your community or school cafeteria with tooth-friendly food
- Change policy/rule related to water access in your school/community center
- Address community water fluoridation where fluoride is either missing or under threat of being removed
- Organize a “Day of Service” where local dentist(s) provide care to children and youth in need
- Remove all sugar-sweetened beverages from your school’s cafeteria, vending machines, and/or sporting events
- Establish a hygiene closet at your school where students can access needed dental health (and other) products



Rules

Get Involved with America's ToothFairy Smile Drive

NCOHF is home to the annual Smile Drive effort designed to raise awareness of the importance of oral health and collect much-needed dental care products for children in need. If you have ever conducted a food or blood drive, then you already understand the basics of a Smile Drive: collect stuff and give it to other people.

While NCOHF focuses on Smile Drive in February, National Children's Dental Health Month, your group can host one anytime for any length of time. Some of our best "Smile Drivers" are youth groups who collect dental care products starting from the beginning of the school year until the end of February. Others collect for a brief period and still manage to collect THOUSANDS of products. Not hundreds—THOUSANDS!!

Successful Smile Drive Tips

1. Visit www.smiledrive.org to register and get more information.
2. Prepare early. Map out:
 - a. **Who:** Who will lead the effort and who will you target for donations? Who will receive your product once it is collected? (You choose a local youth-serving organization in your community to receive your donations.)
 - b. **Where:** Where will you place your Smile Drive boxes? The more boxes the better! Host a box making party!
 - c. **When:** When will you start and how long will your Smile Drive last?
 - d. **How Much:** Set your goal HIGH! Aim for thousands!
3. Promote! Promote! Promote! Download the Smile Drive Toolkit (sent to you when you register) or make your own signs using the NCOHF logo. Use social media, the local TV and radio stations, as well as the newspaper to tell everyone you are doing a Smile Drive.
4. Design a contest between student groups and teachers, coaches and players, dental practices and local businesses to encourage them to collect with you.
5. Allow for monetary donations. Set up donation containers to collect extra change. Your group can purchase product in bulk online.
6. Partner with a local retailer that sells dental care products to see if you can host a collection day in their location.
7. Ask your dentist to help. Dentists may have toothbrushes to donate or can call a local dental representative to see if he/she can help increase your collection.
8. Report your results! Your on-time report makes you eligible for great prizes!
9. Have fun and feel great about giving back to your community.

Join the Oral Health Education Program at NCOHF

Make sure you let us know you are using the OHEP Project Guide Book and keep us posted on your project progress. Take the following steps to let us know what you are doing to address the nation's #1 chronic childhood disease, tooth decay.

1. Register with us at: <http://bit.ly/OHEPReg>.
2. Engage with us on social media. Tag your photos with #TeethRule.
3. Apply for available grants. We announce grants via social media & our e-newsletter. Once you register (see #1), you will receive information on all available resources.
4. Send photos of your projects to programs@ncohf.org

Resources

General oral health information & data:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/oralhealth

Information in English & Spanish on community water fluoridation:
Campaign for Dental Health: www.ilikemyteeth.org

Policy related to children's dental health:
Children's Dental Health Project: www.cdhp.org

Healthy People 2020:
www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topics/oral-health

US Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health:
<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/SurgeonGeneral/Documents/hck1ocv.@www.surgeon.fullrpt.pdf>

Contact Us

For any questions or assistance with your project or more information on OHEP, go to www.americastoothfairy.org or email us at programs@ncohf.org.

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