

An Assessment of Access to Oral Health Care by Women and Children on Medi-Cal

Report compiled by: Rocio Mendez, Santa Clara County Public Health Department Intern
(precepted by Joan Weagle, PHN)



October 27, 2014

Santa Clara County
PUBLIC
HEALTH

An Assessment of Access to Oral Health Care by Women and Children on Medi-Cal

The “Access to oral health care” survey created by the Santa Clara County Child Health and Disability Prevention (CHDP) program was administered to local Medi-Cal accepting dentists as well as CHDP and Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program (CPSP) participating providers in the Santa Clara County. The surveys, which were tailored according to each of the three participating groups, was sent out in May 2014 to a total of 107 CHDP providers, 148 dentists, and 23 CPSP providers. Only a single survey was sent per office even when more than one CHDP or CPSP participating provider could potentially be present at a single office.

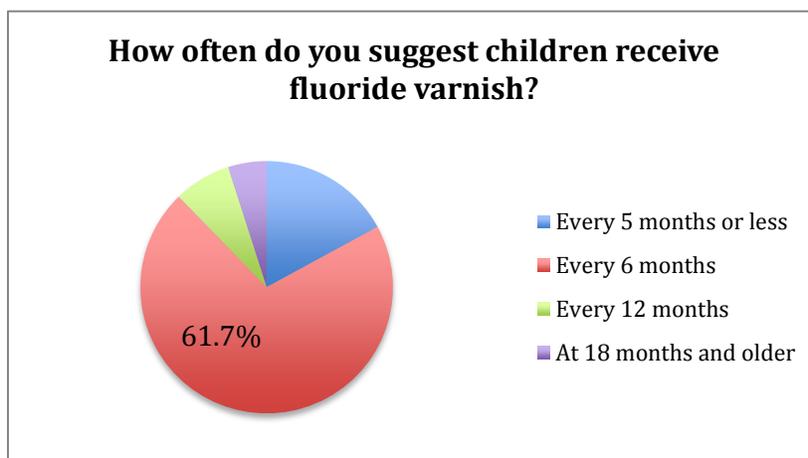
The purpose of the survey was to assess the access to oral health care by women and children with Medi-Cal. Participation in the survey was voluntary, providers were mailed both a paper copy of the survey as well as a Survey Monkey link to complete the survey online. A total of 33% of local dentists, 42% of CHDP providers and 60% of CPSP providers participated in the survey.

Oral Health Care in Denti-Cal Offices

Of the dentists who completed the survey, 32.7% reported seeing children for dental care beginning at ages 12 to 23 months. Comments provided by dentists who do not see children that are less than 3 years of age were as follows:

- Usually very little cooperation
- Can be scary and frantic
- Refer to see child dentist specialist
- Patients <3 years old tend to be very uncooperative

Twenty-eight percent of dentist who responded to the survey reported not seeing



pregnant women as new patients in their clinic. More than 61% of the dentists who completed the survey also reported that they suggest children receive fluoride varnish every 6 months.

An Assessment of Access to Oral Health Care by Women and Children on Medi-Cal

CHDP Oral Health Care Services

Almost three-quarters of the CHDP providers who participated in the survey reported that they agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendation to refer children to a dentist beginning at 12 months of age. Fifty-two percent of them also provide their patients with online and handout resources. Thirty one percent of CHDP providers reported that their clients



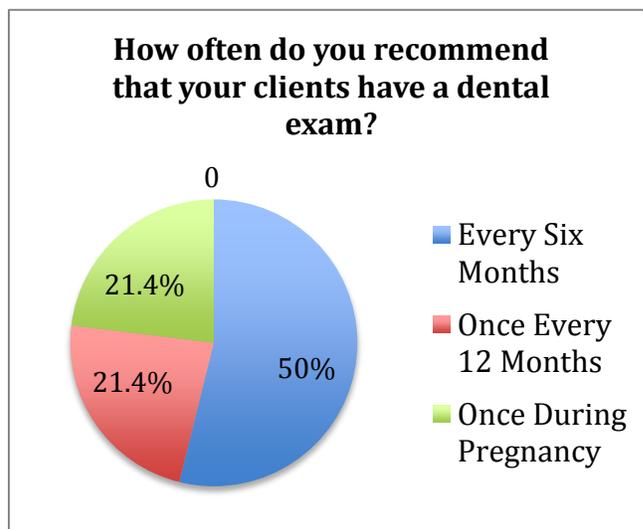
experience a delay in getting appointments.

The most common responses given by providers as to why clients experience a delay had to do with a delay of the parents to schedule the appointment as well as being a low priority for parents. Some providers (39%) also reported that children in their practice encounter barriers in accessing dental care due mostly to the lack of dentist that accept Medi-Cal. Half of the CHDP providers

reported not being familiar with fluoride varnish treatments and the vast majority (90%) of the dentists who completed the survey reported not providing varnish treatments for their patients. More than half (66.7%) of CHDP providers asked to receive the most recent list of dental providers accepting Medi-Cal.

CPSP Oral Health Care Services

The vast majority (93%) of CPSP providers who responded to the survey reported recommending dental exams to their clients during pregnancy. All of the dentists (100%) reported discussing oral health with their clients during their prenatal exams. In their



comments half of CPSP providers reported recommending their clients have a dental exam every six months. Ninety-three percent of them said that their clients report difficulty accessing dental services for a variety of reasons including; patients not being aware Medi-Cal covers basic dental care, lack of available appointments at the county clinics or community clinics as well as dentists not providing treatment during

An Assessment of Access to Oral Health Care by Women and Children on Medi-Cal

pregnancy. Almost three-quarters (71.4%) of CPSP providers surveyed reported no barriers in making dental referrals for their clients. All (100%) said they wanted to receive the most current list of dental providers who see women during pregnancy.

The data collected through this survey makes it evident that both CHDP and CPSP providers experience some forms of barriers at the time dental referrals are made. They report that to some extent their clients also encounter barriers to accessing dental care. This report also indicates that a significant number of providers are interested in receiving resources and information regarding available dental services for their clients. The following resources are available for providers:

Oral Health During Pregnancy and Early Childhood: Evidence-Based Guidelines for Health Professionals

http://www.cdafoundation.org/Portals/0/pdfs/poh_guidelines.pdf

Oral Health Educational Materials- brochures, pamphlets and other material developed by CHDP

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/chdp/Pages/Support.aspx>

How to find a Denti-Cal Dentist

<http://www.denti-cal.ca.gov/WSI/Bene.jsp?fname=ProvReferral>