



NH Oral Health 2013- Mini-Colloquium #1

Defining the Public Health Dental Hygienist Under NH Statute

Families First Health and Support Center- School and Community-Based Programs

What a school based dental hygienist looks like? In the course of a school year, there are numerous requirements that have to be met. Coordination of efforts with school personnel, as well as volunteers, are key to the smooth operation of the program. In basic terms, the program consists of four parts: Classroom education, Dental screenings, In-school dental services (prophylaxis and sealants) and Referrals to dentists for further restorative work.

In addition to these responsibilities, the school based dental hygienist must submit to the billing department, all services rendered to children in school. End of year reports with data collected throughout the year must be completed and submitted to the state as well as the organization or hospital that the RDH works under.

These school based programs are funded through various sources. Some are affiliated with Community Health Centers while others are hospital based. Some receive funding through the NH Bureau of Oral Health. Proposals are submitted to local clubs to request monies to purchase supplies for the programs. Medicaid is a source of income, through billing, as well for these programs.

Referrals are made to local dentists who have agreed to work with children and families who do not have dental homes, although there is a significant shortage of dental homes for many children in our state. Transportation, fear and other factors are only some of the challenges that families face when caring for their child's dental needs.

In addition to the school based programs, many public health hygienists work in other areas as well such as pre-natal programs, early childhood dental programs, WIC sites, nursing homes and parenting programs. There is so much work to be done in terms of oral health education and dental care in our state. Dental hygienists look forward to being the instrument through which the people in our state will be able to gain access to oral health care without the barriers that currently exist.

Cynthia Bishop, RDH, BS
Program Coordinator, Seacoast Healthy Grins
Families First
100 Campus Drive, Suite 12
Portsmouth, NH 03801
ph: 422-8208 x138