

Community Water Fluoridation

State Program: Public Health Dental

National Health Objective: HO 21-9 Community water fluoridation

Block Grant Role: No other existing federal or state funds

Block Grant Funding Percentage: 100% - Total source of funding

Block Grant Current Year Funds: \$246,283

Issue

Dental diseases are chronic, progressive bacterial infections that affect almost everyone. Nationally, 50% of children have cavities in their primary or permanent teeth by age seven. Furthermore 84% of children have experienced decay in their permanent teeth by age 17. Only 8% of adults have no cavities. Dental diseases affect the quality of life and continue to consume considerable health care resources. A child experiencing dental problems and dental pain is at high risk of poor educational outcomes. Loss work and school days occur along with possible residual effects on speech, nutrition and psychosocial functioning. Dental care expenditures in Florida are estimated at \$2.3 billion yearly. The hours of lost school time due to dental problems or dental visits are estimated at \$2.7 million annually. The effects of dental problems are far-reaching and problematic for many individuals.

The addition of fluoride to the drinking water in minute measured amounts helps to prevent dental caries. In fact, fluoridation is the most cost-effective method in preventing dental decay. Several communities throughout Florida lack access to fluoridation and the benefits it brings to children and adults alike. Overwhelming scientific evidence exists to prove the effectiveness of water fluoridation in preventing dental caries.

Still many communities do not have access to fluoridation because municipalities have not initiated fluoridation in their area. Often times, the reason is a lack of funding for the equipment and installation. This is where the Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant helps communities to initiate this measure. The grant often gives communities starter funds so that obstacle no longer exists and communities can form coalitions and education their community or community leaders about the benefits of fluoridation.

Intervention

The "Fluoridation Project" provides technical assistance to communities in attaining fluoridation through community organization efforts. The project also provides a limited amount of funding to assist communities with the initial start-up costs. In cooperation with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the program also monitors the monthly fluoride levels of fluoridating community water systems and provides technical assistance to water systems as needed. In addition the project monitors the research associated with water fluoridation and provides education and information to the public by way of an internet web page, presentations, direct communication, and other resources. This information helps local communities understand fluoridation and encourages them

to take actions in initiating or reaffirming fluoridation.

Impact

The State of Florida has benefited from the Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant through working with local communities to educate people about the preventive effect of fluoridation. Fluoridation went from being available to 25% of Floridians on community water systems to 77.6% of those on community water fluoridation benefiting in 2007. **The Health People 2010 Goal of 75% was exceeded in 2005.** This program has made a huge impact to the state of Florida since its conception. Here a few highlights of the impact it has made over the past year:

- **Over the past fiscal year one system, which served about 18,000 people, initiated fluoridation.**
- **Four other systems decided to upgrade their system to either maintain or increase the population they serve fluoridated water to.**
- **The ability of the Fluoridation Project to facilitate community efforts to counter opposition against fluoridation has been vital in Florida City, Daytona Beach, Deland, St. Lucie County, and Martin County to make sure that local officials vote to both affirm and reaffirm fluoridation.**
- **The program through its partnership with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and local authorities has also been able to identify naturally fluoridated communities throughout the state. This also adds to the numbers of communities identified as benefiting from optimally fluoridated water.**