

Dental Care Access in Wright County Improves

Access to dental care is a real health disparity affecting tens of thousands of Wright County residents. In November 2016, Wright County Public Health partnered with Wright County Area United Way and contracted Children's Dental Services to provide dental care to one of our most vulnerable populations.

Tooth decay is one of the most common preventable diseases in this country. Gum disease in pregnant women has been linked to premature and low birth-weight babies. Systemic diseases such as Leukemia, diabetes, heart, and kidney diseases have oral symptoms including swollen gums, mouth ulcers, dry mouth, and gum problems.

Today in Wright County there are limited dental providers who accept new Medical Assistance (MA) clients. Children's Dental Services was brought in to increase the availability of this desperately needed service.

Beginning in June of 2017, services were increased to twice per month. Originally Children's Dental Services came to the Health and Human Services (H&HS) building once per month. Appointments started to fill fast and waiting lists stretched out five months. Now the first available appointments are usually within three months.

Children's Dental Services will see children and young adults aged 0-26. They also will see pregnant women of any age. Most routine dental care can be provided at these appointments including cleanings, sealants, fillings, crowns, and extractions. They accept all forms of insurance and offer sliding scale payment options.

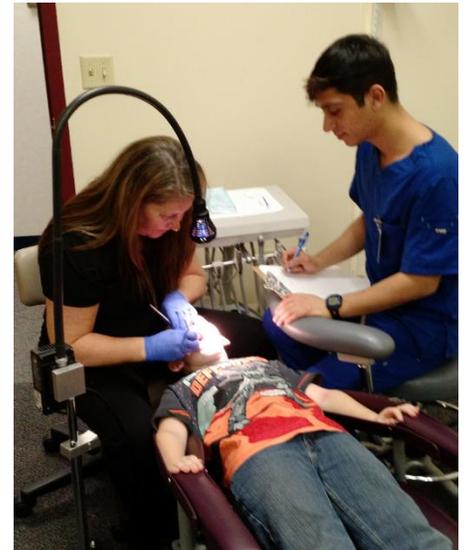
Wright County Public Health is working diligently to inform the public of Children's Dental Services. Child and Teen Checkups, a federally mandated public health program, sends letters and calls families who carry an MA health plan informing them of the service. Flyers can be found at clinics, schools, and throughout various local organizations including Wright County Community Action.

Great strides have been made in dental care access for Wright County residents but still more work is needed. Many local dentists say they are unable to service this population due to the reimbursement rate from MA being lower than the cost of the service. With access limited here, people must travel to see providers located in the cities, which is another half hour or more commute.

In October 2017, the Child and Teen Checkups program began requiring medical clinics to offer fluoride varnish to children 6 months to 5 years at their well child exam. Fluoride varnish has been shown to strengthen tooth enamel. It is also offered through the Wellness on Wheels (WOW) program at Wright County Public Health and is covered by MA up to four times per year.

Regular dental care plays an important role in health. Dental checkups are recommended to begin after the first tooth erupts or no later than 12 months of age and continue every six months thereafter.

Advancing health equity in Wright County through efforts made by various organizations has improved the lives of so many of our residents. If you would like more information regarding Children's Dental Services, please call 612-746-1530.



Ethan Lewerke receives his six month routine dental exam by Children's Dental Services staff at Wright County's Health and Human Services building.