The Journey From Rags to Riches
National Network for Oral Health Access, November 16, 2015

Our mission is to improve the oral health of all.
It Ain’t Easy Being Dental!

[Image of a cute cat]
Common Challenges

• Competition for those patients we need to make it work financially
• Overwhelming demand for care
• Patients with huge dental needs
• Unsustainable payer mix
• Staff recruitment/retention
• Not enough staff
• Not enough resources
More Challenges

- Broken appointments
- EDRs
- High costs of dental
- Lack of support from Senior Management
- Not included as part of Health Center management team
- Pressure to meet unrealistic goals
- Lack of access to data related to dental performance
More Challenges

- Centralized functions (Call Centers, scheduling, reception/registration, billing)
- In many states, poor reimbursement from Medicaid, limited coverage for adults, increased scrutiny on FQHCs

We can all probably think of many more!!!!
What’s a Health Center Dental Program to Do?

Let’s Find Out!
Healthy Smiles Dental Center
Hampton Roads Virginia

“OUR JOURNEY”

Robin Langston, DDS, Chief Dental Officer
Ginger Melton, RDH, BS, Director of Dental Operations
Brief History:

• Program initiated around early 70’s as a result of a Foundation interested in providing dental care.
• Run by State
• Fully Funded
Brief History:

• 1991
  • School Program
    • A single trailer at one school in Portsmouth
      The trailer moved about three times to attempt to increase access to care
      Costly to move
      Only serving three of eighteen schools
      Participation was great
Our First Mobile Program
Brief History

• 2000 +
  • The Foundation decided to move their interest to a Nursing School
  • Before they left, they gave us a **Mobile Dental Unit** and continued to partially fund the program for about two more years
The New Mobile Van was used to intensify the existing School Dental Program by providing dental care during school hours.

The Mobile Van gave us the flexibility to provide care at various locations instead of the one location.
Realized that the Van could bring in Revenue

• The Mobile Van was used to visit four schools in Portsmouth.
  • 2 Dentists, 1 Hygienist
  • 16-20 Encounters per day
  • Two days per week
• The schools that we visited had at least 80% free/reduced lunch
  • Medicaid
  • Cost Based Reimbursement
THEN ...
Effects:

• Lost all of funding
• Van inoperable most of the time
• Kool Smiles came to town
  • Not only did we lose the children on the van, we lost the children in our practice

Which Resulted in
• Layoffs imminent
• Closure imminent
What to Do?

• We Fought!
• We Struggled
• We Struggled Some More
Over the Next Few Years

• We worked hard to see as many patients as we could
• We worked with minimum staff to get the job done
• We raised the sliding scale to accommodate longer appointments
• We contracted with Ryan White to see their patients
• We begged the Foundation and anyone else to help us out
Exploring All Means to Find a Niche
HMMMM . . .

We noticed the children were returning to our practice
Another Mobile Company from Out of Town had come to the schools in our Service Area.
We needed to re-establish the relationship

Or

Form New Relationships
Chose a Different District

Instead of staying in Portsmouth, we moved to Norfolk (neighboring city)

We screened one school

We planned meetings with the Health Department and the District Administration

The results of the screening was enough to convince the district to sign a Memo of Agreement with us to serve their students.

The district consists of: 5 High Schools

7 Middle Schools

34 Elementary Schools
• We started in March and visited 4 schools regularly.

• We visited schools about 2 days per week initially
Not enough

• We were still in the RED
At the Advice of our Executive Director,

Go Strong or Go Home
• Challenged to visit 4 days per week

• We transitioned one of our dental assistants to become the Mobile Program Coordinator
Operation:

• Collected the permission forms
• Sent a schedule to the Nurse
• The children were sent to the Mobile Van by the Nurse
• Dental Care was provided
  • Preventive care was covered under the permission form
  • Restorative Care needed an additional permission from the parent after a treatment plan had been established
Advantages of the Mobile Van

• No space in the school is needed
• Can travel from school to school
• Great Advertising
• Our program was better than the Out of Towners since we were establishing a dental home
Challenges:

• We continued to have mechanical issues with the van
• Even though we chose schools with high percentage of free/reduced lunch, many children were not on Medicaid
• We did not have a consistent driver, so a Temporary Service was used
• The first Mobile Coordinator was out sick frequently
• Opened up a new center
• *Mobile Dental Units are not always “User Friendly”*
Another Challenge:

Getting the permission forms back!
Send with all the other School Forms
Safety Net Solutions Dental Program Assessment

• Because we were not making money, we thought this would be a massacre

• We wanted to be all that we could be, so we invited them in

• Turned out . . . We were on the right track but needed some tweaking from a credible source!
From the Words of Sean “Puffy” Boynes

“Start with Small Changes!”
Best Advice:

- Treat the Mobile Van as a separate practice
- Create a business plan for the van
- Hire a Practice Manager
- Evaluate Your Electronic Dental Record Systems
- Use data to make your case
- SNS gave us a work plan to follow
Changes that we made:

- Added the Practice Manager
- Hired a New Mobile Dental Coordinator
- Hired a full-time Driver
- Sent the Forms out at the beginning of the year with the other school forms
- Began evaluating our Electronic Dental Record/Practice Management System
- Reunited with Portsmouth Schools and asked for an MOA as well
- Worked with Head Start at a different level, using the Mobile Van
Results of the Changes:

• We currently serve
  • 22 Elementary Schools
  • 4 Middle Schools
  • 2 High Schools (one as part of a Health Center)
  • 8 Head Start Centers
When You Have Money
(or the ability to make money)

You Can Get Money
2014 - 2015

• Awarded a grant from the Virginia Health Care Foundation for a Provider
• Awarded two HRSA Expansion Grants for the Health Center
• Awarded a grant from Obici Foundation to provide preventive services in Suffolk, VA
• Awarded a Behavioral Health Grant to provide dental services to CSB Patients

• Awarded a grant for a Dental Navigator
  • Increase access to dental care
  • Assist uninsured children and families to determine if they are eligible for insurance
Along With That, Came a New Van
In addition to

Healthy Smiles Dental Center
In Portsmouth

Oceanview Medical and Dental
in
Norfolk
Current Dental Staff:

- 4 Dentists
- 2 Hygienists
- 7 Dental Assistants
- 1 Mobile Dental Coordinator
- 1 Patient Navigator
- 1 Ryan White Coordinator
- 2 Fixed Dental Centers
- 2 Mobile Dental Units
Best Advice:

- Make sure your administration supports your program
- Keep talking Dental! They will eventually hear you!

Make sure that you have a representative at Health Center Meetings

Have an Assessment by Safety Net Solutions

Remain diligent! Your time will come!