Characteristics of a Quality Oral Health/Dental Program

Successful programs...

✓ Have the Dental Director participate actively in the management and decision-making activities of the Health Center:
  o Have the Dental Director report directly to the Health Center Executive Director
  o Have the Dental Director manage their own department budget
  o Allot sufficient administrative time for the Dental Director to do their job effectively

✓ Are able to best balance mission and fiscal sustainability with effective systems:
  o Have good productivity by addressing scheduling, missed appointments, and drop-in patients
  o Have effective business systems covering fee schedules, eligibility, payers, and collections
  o Understand the role of payer mix in sustainability including subsidizing uncompensated indigent care, PPS rate computation, setting sliding fee schedules

✓ Include oral health as part of overall health:
  o Actively integrate medical and dental programs
  o Are vital partners in creating the Patient-Centered Health Home
  o Emphasize prevention and disease management models instead of end-stage surgical repair

✓ Have the right tools and the right teams:
  o Cultivate a team that works synergistically, collectively and efficiently
  o Provide the appropriate capital infrastructure, equipment, and resources
  o Achieve proper staffing, cultural & language appropriateness, maximal use of support staff scope of practice

✓ Are able to recruit and retain quality professionals and staff:
  o Offer competitive salaries and benefits
  o Provide staff with opportunities for life-long learning and career challenges

✓ Have access to timely data that allows for rapid feedback and action on quality, productivity and costs:
  o Exist in an environment where IT is accepted and integrated to enhance care
  o Receive regular reports from the CFO to assist in clinic management
  o Routinely produce dashboards and track measures

✓ Have a strong quality improvement program in place:
  o Participate in the Health Center’s quality management system, track processes and outcome measures
  o Continuously engage in risk management activities

✓ Have the support of the Health Center Executive Director, management team and Board:
  o Are allocated a proportionate share of the HC’s 330 grant
  o Have the Dental Director appear regularly before the Board of Directors
Methodology:

Characteristics suggested by NNOHA’s Practice Management Committee were augmented by additions derived from a review of the existing Operations Manual for Health Center Oral Health Programs chapters and the publication The Good Practice by Safety Net Solutions. This process resulted in an initial listing of 20 characteristics.

To reduce these down to the top characteristics, the Practice Management Committee was asked to rank the selections by having each member select the top 5 most important and 5 least important characteristics for a successful program. The results were then analyzed and the Fact Sheet developed.

There was high congruence between those characteristics scoring low in importance and high in lack of importance and vice-versa, validating this selection method.

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