Implementing Mobile Dental Services in an Elder Care Facility

Organization:
Harbor Health Services, Inc.

Summary:
Harbor Health Services in Massachusetts determined that access to dental care was an issue for the elderly population in their community. The population had difficulty reaching dental services resulting in unmet needs and adverse outcomes. In response to this issue, Harbor Health Services implemented a program to offer dental services in an elder care facility in their community through their Elder Service Plan which serves participants of the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). PACE is a program through Medicare and Medicaid that provides integrated medical and wellness services to participants. In Massachusetts, PACE coverage includes medical care, physical and occupational therapy, nutritional counseling, social services, dental care, and more. As part of this program, Harbor Health Services is able to provide dental services to PACE participants under a global payment from PACE. To be eligible for Harbor Health Service’s Elder Service Plan, participants must be 55 years and older, have health conditions that qualify them for “nursing facility care”, have the ability to live safely in the community with additional supports, and live in one of their service areas.

For the Elder Service Plan, Harbor Health Services purchased a dental chair to set up in the elder care facility. The program started at one day a week. With the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Oral Health Service Expansion (OHSE) funding in 2016, Harbor Health Services expanded services to four days a week. The dental unit was set up in a large medical procedure room within the main clinical care area at the elder care facility. The dentist sees patients in the elder care facility from 10AM to 2PM which coincides with the arrival and departure times of the elder participants in the program.

The dentist works with a dental assistant for the four days at the elder care facility. The services provided include diagnostic and preventive services, restorations, dentures, partials, and simple extractions. The dental program is equipped with a portable x-ray unit to take radiographs. Harbor Health Services uses NextGen as its electronic dental record. The dentist has a laptop at the elder care facility to access the medical records from the health center as the patients are medical patients of Harbor Health Services. They are also able to treatment plan, complete charting, and document notes. The dental program follows the same quality assurance procedures and chart audits as their health center sites. Patients are scheduled mostly in advance by their care teams within the innovative PACE model. Same day urgent access is also accommodated as needed. Patients that require additional dental services that are not provided at the elder care facility are referred to the health center six miles away or are referred to a community dentist. Transportation services are provided.
For 2019, the elder service dental site is projecting 700 visits. The dentist typically sees 4 or 5 patients a day. Under the global payment from PACE, the program is sustainable. Harbor Health Services continues to provide dental services at the elder care facility with the aim of increasing access to care for this population.

**Contact Person for Inquiries**
Matthew Horan, DMD, MPH  
Corporate Director of Dental Services  
Harbor Health Services, Inc.  
1135 Morton Street  
Mattapan, MA 02126  
mhoran@hhsi.us

**References**
1. [https://www.mass.gov/service-details/what-is-pace](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/what-is-pace)