

# Evaluation of a Comprehensive Program Addressing Oral Health in Multiple, Diverse Community Settings



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## BACKGROUND

The North Dakota Department of Health Oral Health Program (OHP) has implemented several initiatives to address oral health inequity. These efforts include school-based sealant programs, medical-dental integration, dental student rotations in federally qualified health centers, data surveillance and reporting, education for community water operators on water fluoridation, and, most recently, a TeleECHO clinic series to educate primary care providers on how to complete oral health screens and apply fluoride varnish.

To ensure these programs meet the needs of the community, the OHP contracted an external evaluator who is an integrated member of the team completing detailed process and outcome evaluation in real-time. Real time evaluation has been crucial to address the changing landscape in response to the COVID-19 global health pandemic.

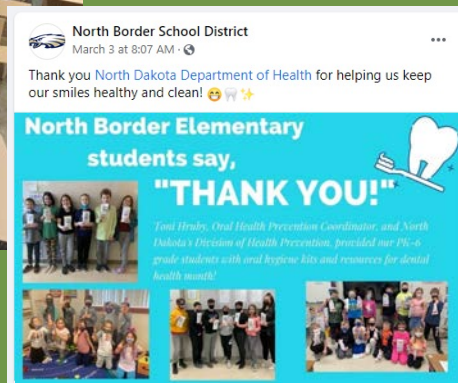
## METHODS

The evaluation is multifaceted and employs review of statewide data systems, aggregate patient data, interviews with students and dental providers, training evaluations, and surveys of medical residents, dentists, and school personnel.

### Important Considerations for Evaluation Activities

- Review all data by specific patient demographics to determine if programs are working for all populations. For example, Medicaid recipients, patients who are low-income, patients belonging to a racial minority, and rural residents.
- Track any changes to service provision and note all dates to stopped services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Consider comparing monthly averages of care provision to accommodate gaps in service provision in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Utilize gaps in service provision to allocate time and effort to training and education needs that have been identified in previous evaluations.
- Recognize the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic on providers and consider reducing reporting requirements.

# Real-time evaluation provides opportunity to have an impact on oral health equity during times of disrupted direct-care provision.



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## RESULTS

- Two dental students completed rotations at a federally qualified health center, assisting the clinic in 'catching-up' with children who had delayed dental care during the COVID-19 pandemic. **These students provided \$35,649 worth of services to patients covered by medical assistance.**
- The school-based sealant program continued to coordinate care in 21 schools that were in-person, but additionally reallocated time to **sending oral health education and toothbrush kits to roughly 44,915 students in 178 schools in North Dakota.**
- New videos were developed to inform communities on the benefits of sealants and school-based sealant programs.
- The public health hygienist employed by the OHP provided her cell number to all clinical residents participating in the medical-dental integration program so they could contact her with any oral health concerns during the interruption in direct-care provision.
- Recognizing the need for training among primary care providers (based on evaluation results), the OHP funded an oral health in primary care TeleECHO series. This includes ten free training events with continuing education for medical and dental providers.

Learn more about the evaluation activities at [ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/oral-health-evaluation](https://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/oral-health-evaluation)

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