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First Teeth First

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Newsletter Vol. 2

Coordinator's Corner

Greetings from First Teeth First! We are happy to report that from July 2018 to January 2019 throughout Maricopa County, our program has provided approximately 10,000 dental screenings for children 0-5 years and over 1,000 dental screenings for expectant mothers. We have also provided over 30 professional development presentations to early care education programs, medical and dental clinics.

We have expanded our case management team by adding an additional social worker to provide individualized care to our urgent dental cases. Having a caring professional to guide them through the dental care process has proven beneficial to the families we serve. With this in mind, we developed a model with three different levels of care coordination to best support the community. The first level of care coordination is *Prevention*, which starts at the initial screening the client receives by our hygienists. The second level of care coordination is *Initial Care Coordination*, facilitated by our health educators. At this level, the health educators contact families that have been identified as having no dental insurance or have never been to the dentist. The third level of care coordination is *Urgent Care Coordination*, facilitated by our social workers. The social worker works closely with the families to assist in the treatment process the child needs and identifies any barriers the families might be facing.

We look forward to continuing to carry out the vision of the Office of Oral Health by promoting oral health equity for all the residents of Maricopa County with purpose and passion!

Sincerely,

Berenise Bauer



"There is a light at the end of every tunnel. Some tunnels just happen to be longer than others."

The success story of Zaira and Cooper, a mother and son full of resiliency and love in search of a better life in America. In August 2018 the FTF social worker received an urgent oral health case of a child and his adolescent mother from Central America. Cooper's screening revealed he had possible decay on eleven teeth and was in pain. Our social worker assessed the case and identified that Zaira and Cooper have been dealing with many social and economic problems beyond comprehension. From poverty, immigration issues, past violent events in their native country to language/cultural barriers in the USA that their oral health needs were significantly disregarded.

The mother committed to working with our social worker to seek dental care for Cooper. After four months and five dental agencies unable to help Cooper for various reasons; our social worker got connected with Dr. Ken Snyder, Dental Director at St. Vincent de Paul, who kindly provided a direct referral to Dr. Bobby Yang at My Kidz Dentist. Cooper was then evaluated by Dr. Yang and determined that 17 teeth were in need of treatment under general anesthesia. Dr. Yang and his team of professionals treated Cooper at no cost. In January, Cooper's treatment was successfully finalized. Mother and son are making steady progress with both their dental and medical needs, despite their many obstacles in their young lives. Cooper's mother is recently married and expecting her second child.

Cooper's family, like most undocumented Latino families in the USA, are at a disadvantage in accessing health care due to their immigration status, especially oral health. While some programs may provide medical care to undocumented children, dental care is limited, thus making these children very vulnerable to future health and social issues.

53 million people live with untreated tooth decay (CDC)

Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease - 5 times more common than asthma, 4 times more common than childhood obesity, and 20 times more common than diabetes. (AAPD)

Oral Health and Pregnancy

Why Does This Matter? By Jackie Sutter, BS, RDH & Jahaziel Linare, MSW

Oral health and pregnancy is a long-standing and at times an overlooked public health concern. Emerging evidence indicates that poor maternal oral health can have significant consequences on a child's oral health. Dental caries is a transmissible disease and mothers are the primary source of passing oral bacteria to their children. Unfortunately, only 26% of expectant mothers visit the dentist. We know that if we can eliminate the amount of bacteria colonization in an infant's mouth during the first two years of life, caries scores at age four will decrease significantly. Therefore, it is our responsibility to share this information with expectant mothers and to educate them that dental care is an integral part of their pregnancy and an important risk modification strategy. According to the Perinatal Oral Health Practice Guidelines, "prevention, diagnosis and treatment of oral diseases, including needed dental radiographs and use of local anesthesia, are highly beneficial and can be undertaken during pregnancy with no additional fetal or maternal risk when compared to the risk of not providing care." Thus, First Teeth First is committed to providing expectant mothers with quality oral health screenings, culturally appropriate education, and referral navigation for locating a dental home. First Teeth First also strives to outreach, educate and advocate health professionals in the community to fill the gap between oral health and pregnancy. Source: smilesforlifeoralhealth.org



"If we recognize this maternal oral connection to early childhood caries, we have a responsibility to provide the appropriate oral health education." – J.S.



Note From FTF Registered Dental Hygienist Jackie Sutter, BS, RDH

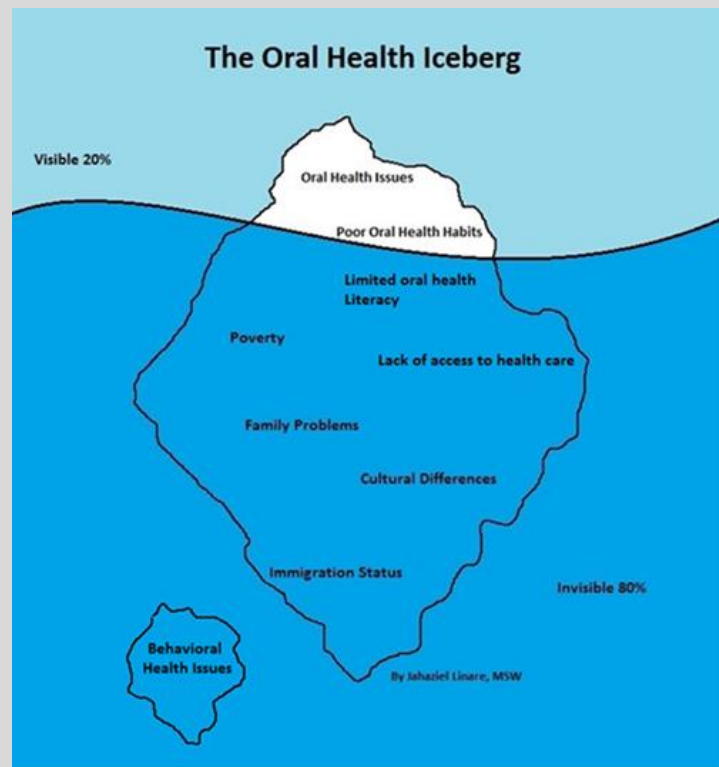
I believe dedication, as well as collaboration, are significant to improving our health care system and the overall health of our community. I am an advocate for oral health in Arizona's most vulnerable populations, and I am committed to ensuring we provide effective oral health education and optimum care to this diverse and transcultural population. Change rarely occurs because of the efforts of one person, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with such a well-versed, dedicated group of professionals at First Teeth First.

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." – William James

Oral Health Social Work

One Smile at a Time by Jahaziel Linare, MSW

It is well understood that low socioeconomic status, limited oral health awareness and physical factors such as poor nutrition, and lack of oral health care access are associated with poor oral health. Most oral health professionals and stakeholders understand that establishing a dental home and good oral hygiene practices are the key to keeping children healthy. The oral health issues and poor oral health habits of many of the underprivileged children are visible to most dental professionals. However, what lies beneath each child's broken smile needs further consideration. As an emerging Oral Health Social Worker, I have documented a strong correlation between poor oral health and social work needs. Poverty, immigration status, cultural differences, and severe family problems are at the core of these stories. Thus, there are many layers of hardship behind every tooth pain, gum infection, or swelling beyond the scope of dentistry. In this pioneering concept of oral health social work, the focus is not merely on the treatment, but also on examining the effects of social and behavioral variables of oral health to support families adequately. At times, it is necessary to complete an assessment to get to the bottom of the problem, as a dentist would perform X-rays to get to the bottom of the cavity. To conclude, it is essential for Oral Health agencies and professionals to understand and be aware of the association between children's poor oral health and social work needs for a successful, and long-lasting intervention. From a social work perspective, the illustration below encloses the main challenges that most of our urgent cases are facing on a daily basis.



We Can All Help

The First Teeth First Fluoride Varnish Program is dedicated to helping **uninsured children and expectant mothers**, who are unable to afford care to keep their teeth healthy. If you would like to partner with us or reaffirm your pledge to increasing access to dental care for young children and expectant mothers, please contact FTF Social Worker (Hazel) at 602-372-1418 or via e-mail: Jahaziel.Linare@maricopa.gov

Together we all can help eliminate the nation's No. 1 chronic childhood illness: pediatric dental disease!