

# **Grassroots and Community Involvement in Creating the Champaign County's Child Dental Access Program**

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March 2003

## **1996**

### **Champaign County Public Health Department is created by voter referendum**

- Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) organizes Friends of Public Health Coalition to create a county-wide public health department by voter referendum, to serve 75,000 Champaign County residents living outside of Champaign-Urbana

## **1997-1998**

### **Champaign County Board of Health formed; Champaign County Public Health Department begins providing basic services to county residents**

- CCHCC and Friends of Public Health Coalition fight attempts by County Board to repeal public health department

## **1999-2000**

### **Champaign County Public Health Department implements new services for County residents including Health Check Clinics, TB Testing and Treatment Program, etc.**

- CCHCC and Friends of Public Health Coalition advocate for creation of basic public health services to be provided out in county to serve the residents  
Tactic: Hold press conference to release "Public Health Report Card" for Champaign County showing poor rates of morbidity for Champaign County residents; discuss disparities in public health services for county versus Champaign-Urbana residents

## **November 2000**

### **CCHCC Organizes Champaign County Community Health Partnership (CHP)**

- CCHCC brings Public Health, Carle Hospital, local government leaders, community social service organizations, labor groups, and faith-based organizations together to create the Champaign County Community Health Partnership. The Community Health Partnership's (CHP) mission is: "To promote, advance and improve the health and safety of the people of Champaign County by addressing the following factors:
  - Access to Care, both financial and physical
  - Preventive Health Services
  - Lifestyle and Culture
  - Environment
  - Public Policy"

## **February 2001**

### **CHP makes Dental Access one of its priorities; the CHP Dental Access Work Group is created to work on Dental Access**

- Internal struggle within CHP about how to conduct a prioritization process. Public health employees and hospital leaders argue for using data-driven process that focuses disease groups and morbidity and mortality data; these data do not capture problems that are well-known in the local community, such as the lack of access to affordable dental care. A compromise is reached so that multiple factors are considered in developing list of health concerns and prioritizing those.

## **June 2001**

### **Town Meeting on Oral Health to provide testimony to IDPH**

- CCHCC and the CHP Dental Access Work Group joins with others to sponsor this Town Meeting on Oral Health. Major problems about access to dental care are discussed, including: a) lack of affordable dental care for uninsured; and b) lack of access to care for Medicaid beneficiaries because of lack of dental providers willing to accept the medical card.
- At meeting, CCHCC discusses Surgeon General's groundbreaking report on oral health disparities and provides evidence for the crisis in Champaign County (including data from calls to CCHCC Consumer Health Hotline showing that over 50% of the more than 130 calls each month to Hotline are about dental access). CCHCC also informs public that community organizations have prioritized dental access as a major problem to be addressed.

## **Summer 2001**

### **CCHCC, Friends of Public Health and CHP's Dental Access Work Group advocate to Board of Health that they create a dental program for low-income county children. Advocate that they create a program that relies on contracting with existing dentists and that addresses barriers of transportation, distance and Medicaid.**

- CCHCC volunteer Advocate speaks to Board of Health about calls to the CCHCC Consumer Health Hotline regarding dental access. Describes desperate and sad case of mother of 3 year old girl in county who could not get services for her child.
- Others advocate by writing letters, making statements

## **August 2001**

### **Board of Health submits a budget to the County Board that includes funding request for Child Dental Access Program**

## **Fall 2001**

## **County Board, after much political struggle, approves funding for Child Dental Access Program**

- CCHCC, Friends of Public Health and CHP's Dental Access Work Group organize community to advocate for funding for child dental program; funding is approved by County Board in November 2001
  - Letters of support
  - Letters to the editor
  - Press conference held out in county to talk about the need
  - Statements to County Board at their meetings

### **January 2002**

#### **CCHCC and CHP Dental Access Work Group hold Dental Access Programs Study Session**

- Purpose of study session is to have community discussion about what type of model to use to create Child Dental Access Program; Board of Health members are invited to attend.

### **January through March 2002**

#### **Although budget for Child Dental Access Program was approved in November 2001, no effort is made to implement the Child Dental Access Program**

- CCHCC, Friends of Public Health, and CHP's Dental Access Work Group advocate for the implementation of the Child Dental Access Program and that a Coordinator be hired

### **March 2002**

#### **Lisa Bell, RDH hired to begin program**

- Public Health Administrator hires Lisa Bell to create and coordinate Program.

### **Summer/Fall 2001**

#### **Board of Health submits budget for Child Dental Access Program which includes additional funding to make Coordinator Lisa Bell full-time employee. County Board approves second year of grant funding for Child Dental Access Program**

- CCHCC, Friends of Public Health and CHP's Dental Access Work Group advocate to Board of Health and then to County Board for continued funding for program
- Tremendous community support is shown for program in the form of letters from parents and social service providers whose children benefited from the Program, community members speaking to Boards to provide testimony, letters to the editor, etc.

### **December 2002 – February 2003**

#### **Public Health Administrator refuses and delays implementation of full-time status for Program Coordinator Lisa Bell; full-time status is finally granted**

- Board of Health members, CCHCC, and County Board Chair and members urge for immediate implementation of full-time status for Program Coordinator
- Media coverage of struggle

**Fall 2002 to present**

***Smile Healthy!* Project initiated to educate community about oral health and to support community organizing efforts to expand access to dental care for children and adults in Champaign County**

- CCHCC awarded Sound Partners grant (Benton Foundation) with WILL-AM 580 Radio and WBCP-FM 1580 Radio for Smile Healthy! Program to improve community's oral health and promote community organizing to increase access to dental care.
- Child Dental Access Program is featured as an example of how community organizing and collaboration can create programs.
- www.smilehealthy.org website is created; community meetings are held to discuss dental access problems and to provide information and resources to community; Child Dental Fair is held in February at Boys & Girls Club

**Ongoing Struggles and Challenges**

- **Funding**
- **Political struggles about community's priorities**
- **Some Board of Health members think Program is not "cost-efficient" (program treats children with very acute problems); Board of Health members need to be educated about public health perspective and long-term benefits and costs (from financial and public health perspective) of not providing this service**
- **Need for expansion of services to adults, including parents of children in Program**

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