



Access to Baby & Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program

The Access to Baby and Child Dentistry program expands access to dental care for young children in Washington State by providing dental services—both preventive and restorative—to Medicaid children up through age 5.

ABCD encourages general dental offices to provide a positive dental experience and a dental “home”. The program identifies and enrolls eligible children and matches each child with an ABCD-certified dentist. More than 1000 Washington dentists, along with office staff have been trained in pediatric dental techniques and preventive services.

“I love seeing the small children and think it’s important they have a ‘dental home’ at a young age to increase their chances of having good oral health for a lifetime.”

- Statement from an ABCD-trained dentist in a recent survey about their participation in the program.

ABCD is a collaborative effort of Washington Dental Service Foundation, the University of Washington School of Dentistry, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Washington State Dental Association, the Department of Health, local dental societies, and local health jurisdictions.

As a result of ABCD, more physicians are now willing to address oral health during well-child checks because ABCD-trained dentists serve as referral sources. Also, Medicaid now reimburses trained and certified primary care providers for delivering oral screenings, health education and fluoride varnish during well-child checks and referral to a dentist as needed. Early preventive treatment is critical for protecting the oral health of children.

ABCD emphasizes the importance of children receiving early dental screenings as soon as the first teeth emerge and helps place children at a very young age on the right track toward better oral and overall health.

Outcomes:

- Medicaid utilization rates have increased substantially. Children under age six receiving dental services increased from 21.1% in 1997 to 38.7% in 2008.
- In 2008, almost 22,000 children under age 2, or 18.6 percent of eligible children, received dental services. When the program was initiated in 1997, only 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers received dental care.
- More than ¾ of Washington’s counties have implemented ABCD programs.
- Twelve nationally published articles have demonstrated that early prevention reduces future dental care costs and that ABCD is an effective, cost-saving method of improving the oral health status of Medicaid-enrolled young children.



Eve Rutherford, DDS, examining a child at a Snohomish County ABCD Training

For more information, please contact the Washington Dental Service Foundation at (206) 528-2337 or visit www.abcd-dental.org