

Project Saving Smiles

Houston's Innovative Oral Health Strategy

Teresita E. Ladrillo DMD, MPH



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Program Description

Project Saving Smiles (PSS) is an evidence-based, three-pronged preventive oral health strategy that provides:

- Dental screening
- Dental sealants
- Fluoride varnish
- Oral health education



Project Saving Smiles 

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Goals and Target population



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Goals:

1. To decrease caries among school children
2. To decrease school absences due to dental problems

Target Population:

Second graders in schools where $\geq 70\%$ (now 50%) of students are on the Free/Reduced Lunch Program

In 2001, 45.9% of second graders in Harris County had untreated dental caries. (TX Region 6 Needs Assessment)

Collaborators/Partners are KEY



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The Houston Health Department (HHD) spearheads this project in collaboration with:

- Good Neighbor Healthcare Center
- Department of State Health Services
- University of Texas School of Dentistry
- University of Texas School of Public Health
- Houston Community College
- Women of Rotary
- Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services
- Independent School Districts





- Innovations
 - Three-Prong Preventive Intervention
 - Children transported to a central site by the schools
 - Incident Command Structure (ICS)
 - Using COH Staff/Volunteers
 - Database-based on CDC SEALS form
- Referrals and Quality Checks

Project Statistics



PSS Measures from School Years October 2008 - May 2017

Measure	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
# of Missions	3	6	6 ¹	6 ¹	8	8	9	9	9
# of Schools Participated	44	74	79	98	137	169	201	216	178
# Children Screened	1,955	2,816	3,458	4,063	5,645	7,082	8,928	9,642	9,401
# Children who received Fluoride Varnish	1,931	2,753	3,450	3,995	5,595	7,055	8,744	9,557	9,284
# of Teeth Sealed	5,739	8,633	11,004	12,714	17,437	22,179	26,389	29,661	30,761
Average Staff & Volunteers per day	67	44	46	52	65	68	73	76	77
Dollar value of services provided	\$ 255,491	\$ 372,639	\$ 477,511	\$ 546,969	\$ 741,950	\$ 938,536	\$1,090,401	\$1,261,636	\$9,51241
Average \$ value of services per child	\$ 131	\$ 135	\$ 137	\$ 135	\$ 130	\$ 133	\$ 122	\$ 130.72	135

¹ Missions include 3 PSS (12 dental chairs) + 3 Mini (7 dental chairs) PSS

Cumulative Results



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PSS Missions School Years 2008-17

1,196 Schools/12 School Districts

Missions: **63**

Children Screened: **52,990**

Teeth Sealed: **164,517**

Fluoride Varnishes: **52,364**

Average Number of Staff/Volunteers/Day: **63**

Dollar value of Services Provided: **\$6,636,374**

Average Value of Services/Child: **\$132.08**

Show Rate: ~ **90%**

Students Needing Sealants: ~**86%**

Lessons Learned



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Project Saving Smile's success can be attributed to:

- Creative internal and external partnerships
- Sharing responsibilities
- Utilization of the ICS
- Partners' common goal to improve the oral health of Houston's children

Compared to the previous school-based sealant program, PSS a school-linked program is more efficient.

- Served more children
- Had improved structure
- Enhanced use of time and resources
- Engaged more partners



Remaining Challenges



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- School Participation – ISD Participation
- Parental consents
- Referrals and Follow-ups
- **FUNDING** for Sustainability !!!

PSS is an efficient oral health strategy

- Provide access to preventive dental services for a large number of at-risk school children
- Decrease number of caries in school children
- Cost savings for family, society and government



Unexpected Outcomes



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- Using staff from various bureaus broke down silos within the department and increased synergy
- Halo effect on non-dental volunteers/staff making them advocates for oral health

