

The Old Saybrook Dental Initiative



History of the Problem:

- Since 2011, the Old Saybrook Public Health Nursing Board (PHNB) working in collaboration with other local health professionals (CT River Area Health District, Y&FS, Old Saybrook Social Services, VNASC, Old Saybrook Food Pantry, Kathy Cobb Nutrition Educator, and Community Health Center Services) have identified a gap in dental services/care to residents of the town.
- We estimate that annually more than 150 Old Saybrook residents of all ages go without dental care, and that this lack of care is affecting their overall health, well being and quality of life. These estimates were obtained from local service providers from the following agencies: Y&FS, Old Saybrook Social Services, VNASC Town Nurse, Food Pantry staff and volunteers.
- The aforementioned group of health care professionals has been meeting regularly in-order to address this important health care issue.
- The gap in dental care services in Old Saybrook is a complicated issue needing a multi-pronged approach; problems and issues Dental Initiative members have identified and are trying to address are:
 1. Determine how many needy Old Saybrook residents are lacking necessary dental care.
 2. Educate the community, government officials and health care professionals to the problem.
 3. Continue to work with existing programs like the CHC to make their services more accessible to Old Saybrook residents. This includes working to bring the Mobile Dental Clinic to Old Saybrook on a regular basis, including to local schools.

4. Establish an organized Pro-Bono Dental Program in Old Saybrook with local dentists.
5. Establish an Old Saybrook Dental Fund to help pay the cost of lab fees for needy residents, with a method to replenish funds so the fund becomes permanent.

Plans and Actions Taken to Solve Dental Care Problem in Old Saybrook since 2011:

- Ongoing meetings with the Community Health Center staff for the purpose of planning and coordination of dental services in Old Saybrook has been established and on-going.
- In order for Old Saybrook residents to use the CHC Dental Clinic in Old Saybrook they must first become a registered clients of the CHC Clinic in Clinton; this was limiting referrals of town residents to the CHC Dental Program and caregivers were reporting difficulties with referrals and patient access to the CHC Dental Clinic. Since the establishment of the Dental Initiative and ongoing communication caregivers report easier access to the CHC Dental Clinics.
- From July 2011 through September 2013 the CHC offered 13 Mobile Dental Health Clinics to shoreline area residents and many of these clinics were in conjunction with the Old Saybrook Social Service “Help Day”. Approximately 124 clients were served and 63 of these clients were Old Saybrook residents; 8 children were served, one infant with “bottle” tooth decay and 18 referrals were made for more extensive treatment.
- Americorps Volunteers through the CHC have attended the Food Pantry on a limited basis to register residents for entitlements and CHC.
- Since 2011 Initiative members have worked with the local school administration and CHC to bring the Mobile Dental Health Clinics back into the schools. Since 2011, two attempts were made to enroll Old Saybrook school age children for, a Mobile Dental Health clinic in the schools and a second clinic offered at St John’s church; neither enrollment attempts were very successful, only 7 children signed up for each clinics by their parents.

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- Letters have been mailed to all local dentists and specialists practicing in Old Saybrook and surrounding towns, asking them to offer pro-bono care to at least two needy town residents each year. To date, four dentists have offered their services and have offered to take at least two pro-bono cases annually.
- In May 2011, the OSPHNB has set aside \$5000 in seed money to establish a permanent Old Saybrook Dental Fund to help pay Lab fees (dentures, crowns etc.) and other services for needy Old Saybrook residents. The PHNB set up criteria for use of this money and the Fund is administered by the Town's Social Service Department. Each year the PHNB adds money to the fund if the budget allows.
- Letters have been sent out to all the local service groups, clubs and church groups asking them to help with on-going development and fundraising plan for the Dental Fund. To date, the PHNB received four public donations to the Dental Fund; three donations from the Lions Club totaling \$2,500.00 and two donations from the Women's Club, one for \$400 and a second for \$75.
- Dr. Rich Goldfeder has volunteered to help the Dental Initiative Program by discussing the new Pro-Bono Dental Program with the Shoreline Dental Association in the hopes of recruiting more dentists.
- In February 2011, Dental Initiative members invited a dental hygienist to the Soup Pantry. She provided 143 individuals with basic education regarding brushing, flossing and selecting the correct toothbrush. Additionally she distributed tooth brushes, floss and toothpaste.
- In April 2011, the PHNB has presented the identified gap in dental care services to needy Old Saybrook residents to the Town Selectmen and they are in full support of the Dental Initiative Plans.
- In May 2012, the OSPHNB donated an additional \$2,500 to the Dental Fund to help pay for dental care for needy Old Saybrook Residents.
- As described previously, initiative members have made attempts to re-establish the Mobile Dental Health Clinics in the local schools with the help of the School Administration and staff (including the school nurses), and we feel this area of outreach still needs additional work. The initiative members are stumped by the lack of parental response to the two clinics offered for the school age population. We estimate that 1/3 of the OS school age population is enrolled in the Husky program; therefore these families are most likely having some

financial need. Yet, only 14 kids were signed up for the two school age dental clinics offered since 2011. In Clinton CT, the CHC has been offering the in-school dental hygiene clinics for many years and we estimate they serve approximately 150 clients annually. Our community's demographics are not un-similar to Clinton's.