

# ORAL health care

## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Oral health care for those living in long term care facilities can be challenging. These recommended practices are designed to guide caregivers so the patients in their care can achieve optimal oral health.

### 1. ROUTINELY ASSESS ORAL HEALTH STATUS

- a. Use a standardized assessment tool to promote thorough and consistent monitoring of each resident's oral health status.
- b. Establish a schedule for conducting assessments at time of intake; at regular intervals such as monthly or at a minimum, quarterly; and at time of discharge.

### 2. IMPLEMENT DAILY ORAL CARE PLANS

- a. Develop a personalized oral health care plan for each resident.

### 3. FACILITATE ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH SERVICES

- a. Ensure that residents visit a dental professional for cleaning on a regular schedule – at a minimum of once a year.
- b. Ensure that residents visit a dentist for an examination at least once a year.
- c. Establish a referral or contractual arrangement with a dental professional in the community to facilitate access to dental health services for residents.

### 4. PROVIDE STAFF TRAINING IN ORAL HEALTH CARE

- a. Provide ongoing oral health training to staff that covers how to assess and monitor oral health status; and how to deliver care to residents with functional needs or complex medical conditions.

### 5. ACTIVELY MANAGE THE ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

- a. Create a system to monitor compliance and resolve identified issues in a timely manner.
- b. Integrate oral health care management into quality and performance measurement initiatives.
- c. Create and adopt written oral health program management policy to guide staff activity and care plans.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DELAWARE ORAL HEALTH SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

### 1. ENHANCE ORAL HEALTH STATUS DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEILLANCE PRACTICES.

- a. Improve data collection, documentation, and reporting of oral health conditions for vulnerable populations.

### 2. ADOPT POLICY AND FINANCING INITIATIVES THAT WILL EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE.

- a. Support state legislative efforts to amend laws to maximize access to oral health care.
- b. Explore the addition of dental services to essential health benefits in state insurance programs.

### 3. IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES THAT WILL STRENGTHEN THE ORAL HEALTH WORK FORCE.

- a. Provide training for staff on all aspects of the oral health care program – including assessment of oral health status, criteria for referral for preventive and restorative dental services, and daily oral hygiene practices.
- b. Expand the provision of oral health services beyond dentists to dental hygienists and dental assistants.
- c. Promote state policy to allow professionals to practice to the full extent of their education and training, and in a variety of settings.
- d. Explore revisions to credentialing policies to increase and strengthen the available, qualified oral health work force.
- e. Develop interdisciplinary teams that incorporate oral health in total health.

### 4. ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO EXTEND CARE OPTIONS.

- a. Contract with private dentists to care for low-income uninsured persons.
- b. Explore mobile dentistry to address transportation barriers.
- c. Partner with training programs to maximize care and training opportunities.