

UNLV School of Dental Medicine

Oral Health America/Ronald McDonald House Charities

Early Childhood Caries Prevention Project (ECCPP)



Oral Health America is partnering with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine (UNLV SDM) to implement a comprehensive evidence-based protocol in Early Head Start and Head Start Centers throughout the State of Nevada. The program will aim to reduce the incidence of childhood caries by the age of five through parent engagement and education, bi-annual oral health screenings and fluoride varnish applications, working with families to establish a dental home, and case management for those children identified as high risk. Ultimately, the goal is to demonstrate that this statewide and targeted community initiative aimed at Early Head Start and Head Start Centers can improve the percent of children turning age five without experiencing caries – particularly in at-risk populations.

- Dental caries is a disease marked by disparities with 80 percent of the caries found in 20 percent of the children. Children aged 2 to 11 with family income below the federal poverty level (FPL) are two times more likely to have untreated decay than peers with incomes above the FPL. Children with serious oral health problems can have difficulty eating, sleeping, and concentrating in school. If left untreated, decay can progress into the surrounding bone and tissues, blocking airways or causing systemic illness and infection.
- There are approximately 3500 low-income children enrolled in Head Start (37 centers in 11 counties) and Early Head Start (29 centers in 4 counties) programs across the State of Nevada.
- According to a current survey conducted in Nevada's Head Start Centers, 47.1% of Head Start children have experienced dental decay (cavities or fillings) in their primary (baby) or permanent (adult) teeth which is well over the Healthy People 2020 target of 30%. A total of 44% of Hispanic children had a higher rate of Early Childhood Caries compared to other racial/ethnic groups with 43.6% of children reporting that they did not receive care because they could not afford it. The proposed ECCPP is the first step in addressing the oral health disparities in this vulnerable population in Nevada.

