

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction



Dental Care Mobile Services for School-Age Youth

The 2015 legislative assembly provided an appropriation of \$100,000 in House Bill 1004 to offset mobile dental care services, including dental treatment, prevention, and education to low-income and underserved children ages 0 through 21 in areas of North Dakota with limited or unavailable dental services. This appropriation addresses one of the greatest unmet needs of low-income families by expanding the opportunity for school age youth to receive basic dental care and for classrooms to receive preventive education and information regarding oral health care.

More than half of North Dakota children have had tooth decay and more than one in five children have untreated tooth decay. The existing dental safety net clinics are not able to meet the current need across the state. Untreated dental problems can result in pain and infection, create difficulty chewing and eating, and interfere with concentration and learning.

The Care Mobile – donated by Ronald McDonald House Charities to the Bismarck Ronald McDonald House in 2012 – was the first state of the art mobile dental clinic in North Dakota to deliver care directly to children on-site in their own neighborhood schools. The Care Mobile program's goals include:

- 1) Improving the oral health of underserved children.
- 2) Reducing oral health disparities.
- 3) Increasing access to oral health services.

It partners with Bridging the Dental Gap Inc. of Bismarck, a non-profit dental clinic, to deliver services in an atmosphere of kindness, compassion, caring and respect.

The Care Mobile operates three weeks each month delivering dental services 40 weeks per year. Its service area is the western half of North Dakota, from the Montana border to an imaginary north/south line 50 miles east of Bismarck, and also includes Rolette County. Ronald McDonald House Charities of Bismarck oversees the management of the Care Mobile, employing two part-time drivers/intake coordinators and a program manager, and contracting for the services of a dentist, dental hygienist and dental assistant. The mobile clinic is equipped with a wheel-chair lift for accessibility.

Imagine being 8 years old, sitting in class and trying to listen to your teacher – when you have a toothache that hurts so badly you don't want to eat and can't sleep at night. Could you concentrate on your school work?

When children's oral health suffers, so does their ability to learn. Hundreds of North Dakota children are trying to cope with painful dental problems that detract from learning and may even cause absences from school. Many parents don't have insurance, transportation options, flexible work schedules or available dentists to treat their children's conditions.

Care Mobile staff can examine children and their siblings through age 21 and provide needed treatment. Children should be able to focus on learning, not on painful dental problems.

Benefits of this program include reducing barriers to dental care for underserved families; addressing a critical community need; preventing inappropriate use of health resources (emergency room) for dental care; increasing awareness of oral health and prevention; fewer missed school days for children; as well as complementing existing community oral health care providers.

To be eligible for Care Mobile services, North Dakota elementary, middle and high schools must have at least 40 percent of their student population enrolled in free and reduced school lunch programs. Head Start/Early Head Start programs, community health centers without dental clinics or services and reservation communities are also eligible, as are children ages 0 through 21 who do not have a regular dentist and have not seen a dentist within the past two years. The program bills Medicaid and other insurances. No child will be denied care due to inability to pay. Parents/guardians are asked to provide medical and dental history and insurance information and signed parental/guardian consent for treatment.

2014 Care Mobile Services	
Schools Visited	43
Children Seen	1,008
Total Appointments	2,166
Total Services	9,293
Cleanings/ Fluoride Treatments	825
Sealants	3,073
Fillings	1,429
Extractions	106
X-rays	1,159

2014 Care Mobile Demographics	
Caucasian	42%
Native American	47%
Male	51%
Female	49%
8 years old or younger	53%

Available services include examinations, x-rays, cleaning, fluoride treatments, sealants, fillings, crowns, simple extractions and referrals as indicated. The staff also provides classroom instruction and education on dental and oral hygiene topics for all grades. All children receive oral health education and a home care packet to take with them.

Costs to operate the Care Mobile are approximately \$640,000 per year; about one-fourth is covered by site partner revenues and third party payors. Recognizing that some schools/districts may require up to 10 days to reach all children in need, each school/district can arrange for services ranging from three to five days with multiple visits.. Each school is asked to pay a \$600 fee for each week of services. Schools identified as Title I “school-wide” can use Title I funds for this fee. Other possible funding sources are PTO contributions, community service club or corporate contributions, hospitals, churches and general school funds. In-kind matches also can meet the fee and may include, but are not limited to, lodging, meals and mileage/gas.

Costs to operate the Care Mobile are approximately \$640,000 per year; about one-fourth is covered by site partner revenues and third party payors. Recognizing that some schools/districts may require up to 10 days to reach all children in need, each school/district can arrange for services ranging from three to five days with multiple visits.. Each school is asked to pay a \$600 fee for each week of services. Schools identified as Title I “school-wide” can use Title I funds for this fee. Other possible funding sources are PTO contributions, community service club or corporate contributions, hospitals, churches and general school funds. In-kind matches also can meet the fee and may include, but are not limited to, lodging, meals and mileage/gas.

To schedule services or for more information, contact Bismarck Ronald McDonald House Charities at 701.258.8551, rmcm@rmhcbismarck.org or go to rmhcbismarck.org/caremobile/.



Students ages 5-17 missed 1,611,000 school days in 2006 due to acute dental problems – an average of 3.1 days per 100 students.
 — National Center for Health Statistics



North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
 Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent
 600 E Boulevard Ave, Dept 201
 Bismarck ND 58505-0440
www.nd.gov/dpi

For more information, resources or technical assistance, contact:
rmhcbismarck.com/caremobile/
 701.258.8551
rmcm@rmhcbismarck.org