

Quality and Productivity Commission
34th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Leading with Excellence"

2021 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: Infection Control Practices in Dental Settings

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: MARCH 26, 2020

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE **COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD ONLY**. (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note:** Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 Dentistry is considered one of the highest risk professions regarding COVID-19
 2 exposure due to its routine delivery of services that generate high levels of aerosols.
 3 Tiny droplets coming from an infected patient's mouth or nose can travel several feet
 4 and even survive on surfaces. Unknowingly, asymptomatic or presymptomatic patients
 5 could be a source of COVID-19 infection during dental treatment, posing risk to the
 6 dental staff and to an increase of community transmission. On April 7th, California
 7 Department of Public Health instructed that all dental offices postpone all but urgent and
 8 emergency care. The degree of community transmission was very high in LAC,
 9 therefore these recommendations were in effect until June 1, 2020. Starting July 15,
 10 2020, and still ongoing, Oral Health Program investigates every LAC Dental Healthcare
 11 Worker (DHCW) that is infected by SARS CoV-2 to ensure that infection and source
 12 control recommendations provided by DPH and CDPH are in place, and are, in fact,
 13 preventing the spread of infection. COVID-19 is a new disease, and we are still learning
 14 about how the virus spreads and the severity of illness it causes. It's imperative to
 15 ensure the safety of the more than 40,000 DHCW in LAC and the population they serve.

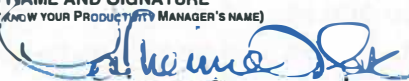
BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Public Health, 313 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90012	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-351-1270
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PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Maritza Cabezas DDS. MPH. MCABEZAS@PH.LACOUNTY.GOV	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-351-1270
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PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Catherine Mak MBA. 	DATE 6/25/21	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-288-7240
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DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Barbara Ferrer MPH, MEd., PhD. 	DATE 06/24/2021	TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-351-1270
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****ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE****

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project to the **County**. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success and **specify assessment time frame**. Use Arial 12 point font.

Challenges:

Dentistry is one of the professions at highest risk of being exposed to COVID-19 due to its routine delivery of services that generate high levels of aerosols. The practice of dentistry involves the use of rotary dental and surgical instruments, such as handpieces or ultrasonic scalers and air-water syringes. These instruments create a visible spray that can contain particle droplets consisting of water, saliva, blood, microorganisms, and other debris. Tiny droplets coming from an infected patient’s mouth or nose can travel several feet and even survive on surfaces. Point-of-care testing in dental offices was not available during the height of the pandemic, and is currently still considered to be an expensive service; thus there was an inability to test all patients before being seen for their appointments. Unknowingly, asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic patients could be a source of COVID-19 infection.

On April 7, 2020, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released a guidance instructing that all dental offices postpone all treatment, except urgent and emergency care. On May 19, 2020, the CDC published the Interim Guidance for Dental Care Settings which provided updated recommendations on infection prevention and control guidance for dental offices and information on how these measures could be additionally augmented during the pandemic in order for patients to safely receive the full range of dental care. During this period, the degree of community transmission was very high in Los Angeles County (LAC) resulting in CDPH recommendations remaining in effect until June 1, 2020. This was a challenging time as LAC had stricter guidelines than many other counties and was stricter than the State’s guidance. The intent of deferring treatment in LAC was to help mitigate the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, conserve essential personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical frontline colleagues and avoid the need for patients requiring emergency dental treatment to go to overburdened hospital emergency departments. COVID-19 was a new disease, and we are still learning how the virus spreads and the severity of illness that it can cause.

Starting on July 15, 2020 continuing on to present day, the Oral Health Program (OHP) investigates every LAC dental health care personnel (DHCW) that is infected by SARS CoV-2 to ensure that infection and source control recommendations provided by DPH and CDPH are in place and are effective in preventing the spread of infection in this high risk environment. It was and continues to be imperative that OHP ensure the safety of it’s more than 40,000 DHCWs and the population they serve.

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Solution:

In an effort to provide the most recent guidance from the CDC and CDPH, recommendations reflecting LAC DPH OHP setup a dental healthcare workers (DHCW) webpage in March 2020. To address a flood of questions from DHCW, OHP developed a *Dental Healthcare Personnel FAQ* located on the same webpage. This assisted DHCWs on how to safely provide emergency and urgent dental services while minimizing risk to patients and staff. On May 20, 2020, OHP Dental Director, Dr. Maritza Cabezas, presented and provided LAC DPH dental guidance to the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County dental directors. OHP partnered with the six dental societies to disseminate the information on the DHCW FAQ to their ~6,000 dentist members. OHP also attended weekly virtual meetings with the Department of Health Services (DHS) dental providers to provide dental updates to community dentists and to respond to inquiries and concerns regarding dental services. On April 2020, OHP requested support from the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) on how to assist patients in accessing reliable emergency dental treatment during the pandemic. As a result, DHCS developed a map, published on the Medi-Cal Dental website, that displayed dental providers confirmed to be open and offering emergency dental care. OHP also developed a dental flyer in May 2020 to provide the general public with oral health messages, education, referrals, and resources during the pandemic.

As COVID-19 cases increased in Los Angeles County, OHP staff were recruited as part of the County’s COVID-19 Incident Command team in July 2020. OHP staff assisted the Acute Communicable Disease Control (ACDC) program by calling dental clinics to follow-up on DHCWs that tested positive for COVID-19, going over protocol recommendations, providing guidance and resources, and answering any questions. OHP worked with ACDC to develop a series of documents for DHCW COVID-19 case follow-ups. The OHP developed the *Dental ICS Calls Procedures Guide* which provides steps on how to appropriately log the follow-up calls with the dental offices. Follow-up emails to the dental office were also sent to ACDC COVID-19 Outreach Unit. The *COVID-19 Dental Health Care Worker (DHCW) Case Follow-Up Protocol* provided talking points, resources, and follow-up email scripts. Talking points include discussions on the current precautions the dental office is taking and emphasizing CDC and LAC DPH recommendations. Recommendations entail universal masking at all times, monitoring for symptoms, identifying DHCW who had close contact with the positive staff, DHCW quarantine after exposure to the confirmed case, notifying patients of their contact with the confirmed case. LAC DPH provide CDC guidance on return to work for confirmed DHCWs, but facilities could choose to follow this guidance or be stricter with their protocols. The follow-up protocol also includes going over Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) during the calls. The OHP also developed

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Protocols for Identifying Potential Outbreaks in Dental Settings to be used when there are three or more staff members with a confirmed positive test for COVID-19 over a 14-day period and that work(ed) at the same dental facility. OHP obtains all positive staff members names and DOBs and goes through each staff member to find out where their exposure occurred. OHP obtains the information on the individuals infected and through a series of questions to understand the interaction for each positive staff member and their interactions with each other. The goal is to make sure that the clinic is taking the correct precautions to protect the patients and staff against further exposure and to ascertain if there is an epi-link (i.e., that the infection was not from patient to staff or from staff to staff transmission through interacting in a shared area, or improper use of PPE). If the staff members were exposed within the work environment or if an office was not following protocols, OHP provides guidance to that office in the areas where there has been a break in infection control practice or notifies the ACDC COVID-19 Outpatient team for further follow-up. If the staff members were exposed outside of the work environment, the OHP notifies the ACDC COVID-19 Outpatient team that there is no indication of a break in infection control protocols at the office. OHP wants to assure that the infection control recommendations were effective in the prevention of COVID-19 within the dental setting.

Benefits:

As of today, OHP (2 FTEs) have successfully followed up on 408 cases of DHCW, including multiple outbreak cases. The team provided consultation and technical assistance to the management staff of the offices where the DHCWs work. Guidance was given on infection control, source control, PPE, environmental control and additional topics on COVID 19 infection prevention in the dental setting. This was a brand-new service offered to LA County's diverse dental work force communities. In addition, OHP successfully collaborated with six dental societies representing ~6,000 licensed dental professionals in LA County to disseminate DPH and CDPH guidance. Not only did OHP launch its sub-webpage on DPH's COVID 19 website *Information for Healthcare Providers*, but OHP also partnered with local dental societies to bridge the gap of communication to 40,000 DHCWs who might not have been familiar with County or DPH websites. They were able to obtain vital information through dental society newsletters and social media posts. The partnership enhanced the program's outreach with dental offices, with the vast dental workforce and the millions of patients those offices serve. Regardless of an individual's role in the dental office, every COVID 19 positive case was provided support to ascertain that DPH and CDPH infection control protocols were followed and any questions regarding those protocols were answered. Because of that LA County residents and the dental community had a better understanding of DPH's role in disease prevention and health promotion.

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Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only. Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12-point font.

Goal 1(1) Make Investments that Transform Lives

- All communications/investigations with LAC Dental Healthcare Worker’s (DHCW) that are infected by SARS CoV-2 are designed to ensure that infection and source control recommendations are in place and preventing the spread of the virus. Therefore, all activities related to outbreak investigation was done with the intention of preventing further morbidity and mortality due to COVID-19.

Goal 2 (2.4) Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities

- Information provided on the DPH website titled “*Coronavirus Disease 2019 - Information for Dentists*” offered a variety of updates regarding latest State recommendations and provided a vast number of resources on resuming deferred and preventive dental care in LA County. Additionally, FAQs were developed to assist DHCW as they plan to resume deferred healthcare services for patients. OHP supported the dental community so essential health care infrastructures were maintained to provide much needed oral health services.
- An oral health flyer in English and Spanish was created for patients and posted on the DPH Oral Health website to help inform the community of the dental care recommendations during the pandemic and how to maintain their oral health. The flyer also has healthy tips listed on how to have a healthy mouth and information on how one can locate a dentist.

Goal 3 (2.1, 2.2 and 4.2) Realize Tomorrow’s Government Today

- On May 7, 2020, the CDPH guidance was sent to all California Dental Health Care Personnel. OHP worked closely with the state on the guidance regarding resuming deferred and preventive dental care before its release.
- OHP engaged and maintained communication with 6 LAC Dental Societies to inform all their members of the updates on the State and CDC guidelines to help them navigate all the complex environmental challenges posed by COVID-19 disease.
- In July 2020, OHP conducted an extensive online survey regarding the impact of COVID-19 on dental office operations, services, and the dentist’s own wellbeing. The purpose of the survey was to assess the infection control protocols and the sustained impact of COVID-19 on dental services. The information gathered was posted on the DPH OHP website and shared with local and state oral health stakeholders. The information is to be used to improve emergency preparedness and infection control protocol recommendations for a future state of emergency.
- The interaction between OHP and the 6 dental societies, the constant website updates, and the data sharing through the OHP website, were mechanisms to help LA County residents have a better understanding of DPH’s role in disease prevention and health promotion. Local residents and the dental community, are now, more than ever, reaching out to our department for guidance.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12-point font

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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