

2018 - 2019 Dental Program Annual Report



Children's
FRIEND



Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report of the Children's Friend Dental Program for the year ending June 30, 2019. As you read this report, you will learn more about the great work being done to promote good oral health across the agency.

As our sixth year comes to a close, we are thankful for your continued interest and unwavering support of the dental program. The program is grounded in our family-centered guiding principle and reflects our overall mission to improve the well-being and healthy development of Rhode Island's most vulnerable young children. Our rewarding partnership with the Samuels Sinclair Dental Center at Rhode Island Hospital continues to be a great collaborative success.

The statistics shown on the key accomplishments page demonstrate the continuing effectiveness of the program. From the inception of the program six years ago, we have witnessed a dramatic shift from children who were largely without good dental care to a program which now delivers a broad array of routine and innovative dental services. Beyond the excellent dental services provided by Samuels Sinclair is our commitment to emphasizing good dental habits on a daily basis through classroom education and the hosting of periodic dental fairs. We believe that the 2018-2019 statistics speak for themselves.

Dental homes¹, which provide dental care by a licensed dentist in a manner that is comprehensive, accessible, coordinated, and family-centered, continued a positive trend. The partnership is raising awareness of the importance of a dental home. Ninety-seven percent of families have a dental home, and with their increased knowledge of good oral health care, families have gained the self-sufficiency to engage in dental care on their own.

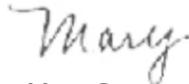
In the 2019-20 year, with a new Head Start enrollment process, our nursing staff will have the opportunity to engage in more conversations with families about the importance of oral health and access to good oral health through the Samuels Sinclair partnership. We will also strive to increase awareness of and access to the partnership across all agency programs focused on children ages zero to five.

The dental program has evolved over time, but there is still much work to be done in serving more children. With your support, we will continue to work with Samuels Sinclair Dental Center, our dedicated staff, and our children and their families to address oral health needs and how best to meet those needs, and to continue to design services that increase access for all.

Sincerely,



Dana Mullen
Chief of Programs
Children's Friend



Mary Cram
Board Member
Children's Friend

Bilingual Family Advocacy: Meet Teklu and His Family

Solomon arrived in Rhode Island from Ethiopia on a student visa in December 1991. He had traveled 6,884 miles with no money in his pocket and just the clothes on his back. At 18 years old, Solomon did not understand a word of English but knew in his heart that his journey would provide him with hope for a better life.

While attending Hope High School, Solomon began working part-time in a jewelry packaging company. In 2001, he visited family in Ethiopia and met a woman named Rozina. They developed a friendship and wrote to each other for three years until they married in October 2004. In May 2006, Rozina was granted a visa and moved to Providence to start a family. In 2011, Solomon learned about Children's Friend and the couple enrolled their first-born son, Teklu, in Head Start at Children's Friend.

Cristina, a Family Advocate at Children's Friend, was assigned to the family. Her primary responsibilities included providing a range of culturally competent home-based services, including parenting education, developmental milestones, health and nutrition education, home management skills, crisis intervention, vocational development and social services linkage, for all families participating in Head Start.

Cristina interviewed Solomon and Rozina to coordinate appropriate referrals so their son could receive a physical examination, immunizations, and a screening of his hearing and vision. At three years old, Teklu had never been to a dentist nor did he have a routine of brushing his teeth twice every day, which is so important for good oral health. Statistics from the American Academy of Pediatrics have shown that by age three, 28% of children have one or more cavities.²

Cristina told Teklu's parents about the Children's Friend Dental Program and about a dental sealant, which helps to protect the chewing surfaces from cavities by blocking germs which may lead to tooth decay. Solomon and Rozina signed the necessary paperwork and soon thereafter, Teklu received a comprehensive dental screening at Samuels Sinclair Dental Center. During his first checkup, it was discovered Teklu had two cavities. Teklu's cavities were treated and a dental sealant was applied to his teeth when he was four years old. "Since Teklu received the sealant for his teeth, he has not had another cavity. My wife and I are so happy that our son receives the care he needs for his teeth," said Solomon.

Cristina cherishes her role as a Family Advocate and takes great pride in seeing families succeed. She observes firsthand the healthy development of at-risk children and truly enjoys interacting with families. She is thrilled that now 11-year-old Teklu continues to receive routine dental checkups. The family has grown to include Marhawet (10), Peter (7), and Dighe (3) who is currently enrolled in Head Start and is the fourth child of Solomon and Rozina to call Samuels Sinclair their dental home.

In reflecting on the tremendous impact Children's Friend has on her family's health and well-being, Rozina says, "I am so glad to see Cristina when she visits our home. I don't know what I would do without her."



¹ A "dental home" is care provided by a licensed dentist in a manner that is comprehensive, accessible, coordinated and family-centered. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www.aapd.org/advocacy/dentalhome/>

² Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5, 6th Edition (Copyright © 2015 American Academy of Pediatrics)

Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/pages/teething-and-dental-hygiene.aspx>



Promoting Good Oral Health: Absorbed Within Our Classrooms

Tooth decay is the most common chronic infectious disease of childhood,³ states the American Academy of Pediatrics. One out of 10 two-year-olds already has one or more cavities, and by age five, nearly 50% of children have one or more cavities.⁴ These statistics are alarming and confirm that we cannot neglect children's dental health.

Teaching good oral hygiene to children is extremely important. Many parents assume that cavities in "baby teeth" are of no concern since the teeth will fall out eventually. However, tooth decay in baby teeth can negatively affect permanent teeth and can be a precursor for future dental problems. When parents discuss good dental habits with their children, they help to promote healthy teeth throughout the children's lives. Early intervention in children's oral health is the first line of defense in preventing dental problems such as gum disease, plaque, and cavities.

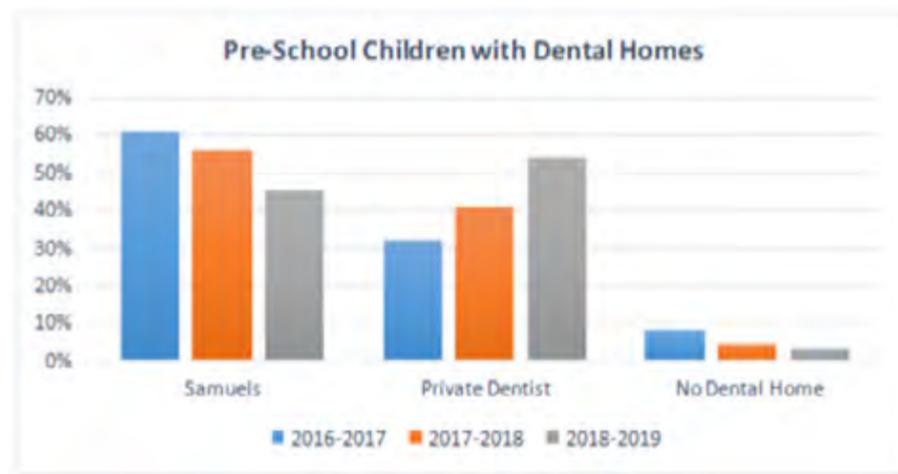
Children who are taught good oral hygiene are also more likely to embrace a basic dental routine such as brushing their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, flossing between teeth daily, eating a healthy diet that limits sugary beverages and snacks, and seeing a dentist regularly for prevention and treatment of oral disease. Maintaining this healthy regimen is key to a healthy mouth and a beautiful smile.

At Children's Friend, educating young children about the importance of good oral hygiene is an integral part of the curriculum. Jennifer, a preschool teacher at the Friendship Center in Providence for 10 years, loves teaching children about the importance of caring for their teeth. In addition to brushing their teeth daily after lunch, students also engage in classroom activities such as flossing Play-Doh in plastic egg cartons and observing the proper brushing motion. *"For many of these children, this is their first experience with dental hygiene,"* Jennifer states. *"It's so critical to instill these important dental habits in children who have not been exposed to good oral health at this early age."*

In another classroom activity, students are asked to identify which foods are healthy compared to which foods are sugary and may lead to tooth decay. Jennifer reflects on her important role as a teacher and making a genuine impact in a child's life. She says, *"It's so rewarding when I know a child understands a particular lesson. It's like a light goes off in their head and a big smile appears on their face."*

Dental Homes: A Continued Positive Upward Trend

The partnership is raising awareness of the importance of a dental home. More families have a dental home and, with their increased knowledge of oral health care, they have gained the self-sufficiency to engage in dental care on their own.



³ How to Prevent Tooth Decay in Your Baby (Copyright © 2004 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 09/2015)
Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx>

⁴ Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5, 6th Edition (Copyright © 2015 American Academy of Pediatrics)
Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/pages/teething-and-dental-hygiene.aspx>



Our Dental Sealant Project: An Intensified Effort to Serve More Children

Children's Friend and Samuels Sinclair are committed to ensuring children receive the care they need for good oral health. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 40% of children have decay by the time they reach kindergarten.⁵ Cavities left untreated are painful, can cause infection, and may lead to problems with eating, speaking and learning.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's research shows that dental sealants prevent 80% of cavities in the back teeth, where nine in 10 cavities occur.⁶ Now in its fifth year, our Dental Sealant Project seems to confirm that dental sealants applied to primary teeth are effective in forming a protective barrier that helps prevent bacteria from causing cavities and tooth decay.

Applied by a licensed dental professional, sealants flow into the deep grooves of the teeth. This year, of the children screened for sealants - which has expanded beyond Head Start to include children in Early Head Start and Pre-K classrooms - six children were deemed qualified to receive sealants. That number may seem low; however, of those screened for sealants, 481 children were three-year-olds whose molars had not yet developed, making them ineligible for the treatment. The hope is that we will be able to provide sealants to these children when they eventually enroll in Head Start at Children's Friend. Of the six children who qualified for the sealants, four children had the sealants applied in January. When checked in May, all sealants were intact. The Children's Friend nursing team continues to work with families to enhance awareness of the benefits of sealants.

Cavities are preventable and Children's Friend has intensified its efforts to promote good oral health for the entire family. Two years ago, we established a Dental Team comprised of two health managers and two bilingual health project coordinators. Maria Chionchio, RN, BSN, Nurse Family Partnership Manager at Children's Friend, directs the Dental Team and is focused on increasing the number of children with access to a licensed dentist and preventative and critical care oral health services.

"We are thrilled to offer dental sealants to children enrolled in our programs," said Maria. *"With a cost of \$150 per application, many of our families would not otherwise be able to afford this beneficial service."*



⁵ American Academy of Pediatrics: Brushing Up on Oral Health: Never Too Early to Start, Adapted from Healthy Children Magazine, Winter 2007
Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx>

Breaking Down Barriers and Increasing Access to Dental Care: An Ongoing Team Effort

Since the inception of our partnership with Samuels Sinclair Dental Center at Rhode Island Hospital in 2012, the Children's Friend Dental Program has grown into a true success story. The program today ensures that preschoolers enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K at Children's Friend have early access to comprehensive high quality dental care. The partnership has resulted in thousands of children over the six years gaining access to preventative and routine dental care. Like many successful endeavors, the dental program is a result of the dedication and passion of a team of people -- and the contributions they make in its development and, later, in its ongoing evolution and stewardship.

Mary Cram, Lee Grossi, and Maria Chionchio have been key partners for the Children's Friend Dental Program for the past six years -- champions in breaking down barriers that many of our families experience when attempting to access health services.

Mary and Lee served on the Joint Oversight Committee along with representatives from Rhode Island Hospital and provided valuable insight and direction in creating the framework for this partnership. They continue in an oversight capacity today. As Nurse Family Partnership Manager at Children's Friend, Maria oversees the day-to-day operations of the dental program and is integral to its success.

With extensive experience in marketing, public relations and corporate communications, Mary was first elected to the Children's Friend Board of Directors in 2005 and has served on numerous committees and held a number of leadership positions over the years. However, her involvement with the dental program is particularly close to her heart. *"I have witnessed first-hand the amazing work this agency does for our children with the help of our wonderful community partners,"* said Mary. *"It is our hope - and our goal - that the relationship between our children and Samuels will continue long after the pre-school years,"* Mary continued. *"When our children leave the agency, they have an established relationship with a dental provider - they have a dental home."*

After working for three decades for Rhode Island State government, Lee accepted the position of Chief Financial Officer at Children's Friend in 2010, later becoming Director of Strategy. Now retired, Lee continues to volunteer his time at Children's Friend as a member of the Building Committee, Nurse Family Partnership Advisory Committee, and Legacy Committee of the Harriet Ware Society. Lee played a supportive role in drafting the framework for this mutually beneficial dental partnership with Samuels Sinclair. *"It's a win, win, win. The families who so desperately need these fundamental services win; Children's Friend wins; and Rhode Island Hospital wins,"* said Lee.

Throughout his tenure at Children's Friend, Lee has observed the remarkable work that the agency is doing to ensure that children have the resources they need for a safe and healthy start in life, and that families who are struggling are able to build a better tomorrow through the many programs that are offered.

Maria Chionchio RN, BSN joined Children's Friend in January 2005 and has always put the health and well-being of children at the forefront of her work. She implemented the first Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at Children's Friend and played an active role in the establishment of two evidence-based home visiting programs - Nurse Family Partnership and Healthy Families America.

Like Mary and Lee, Maria's primary focus with the dental program has been the thoughtful implementation and ongoing promotion of good oral health for all of the agency's children. Maria states, *"With this partnership, Samuels has served many children in school, provided emergency services to families as needed, and has now given these families a dental home they can have even after the child leaves our program and enters the school system."* She continues, *"Our services will continue and our hope is to educate as many families as possible about the importance of good oral care."*

Key Accomplishments: Continued Progress

Research shows that the sooner children receive regular dental exams and quality dental care, the healthier their teeth will remain throughout their lives. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that a dentist will want to see a child by his/her first birthday or within six months of the first tooth's emergence.⁷

Children's Friend continues to be a leader in providing a comprehensive dental program to children in Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care partners and Pre-K. Our rewarding partnership with Samuels Sinclair Dental Center at Rhode Island Hospital continues to be a great collaborative success. The statistics from our 2018-19 year speak for themselves:

- 62 children under the age of three received services through Samuels Sinclair. At the same time, families were encouraged and given the opportunity to access a dental home - either through Samuels Sinclair or a private dentist.
- All of our children were screened for eligibility to receive dental sealants. Of those examined, six were eligible with four children receiving the application in January. When examined in May, the sealants were intact.
- In our preschool program, 97% of children had a dental home either with Samuels or another community provider.
- 580 children across our programs were screened by Samuels Sinclair and now have access to Samuels as their dental home.
- 575 children received a dental cleaning and fluoride treatment from a dental hygienist.
- Children received dental exams, cleanings and fluoride treatments at Children's Friend sites and partnerships sites.
- Wednesdays continued to be designated as "Dental Hygiene Day," further standardizing access to cleanings and fluoride treatment.
- In September and October, the Children's Friend Health Team hosted six health fairs to familiarize families with community resources, such as dental insurance, and to provide immediate access to services.

One of the most successful trends in the operation of the dental program over the past six years has been the gradual shift in providing dental services from Samuels Sinclair to families providing their own services for their children through private dental arrangements. Please refer to the Promoting Good Oral Health page.

Through the consistent promotion of good oral health within the daily classroom routine of programs within Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care partners and Pre-K, we will continue working to increase the number of children with access to high quality dental care, a licensed dentist and a dental home.

Mary, Lee and Maria are deeply committed to doing all they can to help children. But it is an ongoing team effort. With steadfast support from the Children's Friend Board of Directors under the leadership of former board chairman William Allen, and current board chairman Michael DiSandro, and countless front-line workers at Children's Friend, Samuels Sinclair Dental Center, and our child care partners, the dental program will endure the test of time and continue to serve the needs of vulnerable children and their families for years to come.

7 American Academy of Pediatrics: 5 General Guidelines for Early Dental Health, Adapted from Healthy Children Magazine, Winter 2007
Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brushing-Up-on-Oral-Health-Never-Too-Early-to-Start.aspx>



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