

DENTAL HYGIENIST LIAISON



Melissa Utley, RDH, LAP
Region 8 DHL Coordinator and Montana DHL
tuthfari@gmail.com
406-861-7663

What Is the Dental Hygienist Liaison Program?

Dental hygienists play an important role in promoting oral health and preventing oral disease. Because of this role, the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW), working in partnership with American Dental Hygienists' Association, created the Dental Hygienist Liaison (DHL) program. Under the DHL program, one dental hygienist from each state volunteers to help promote oral health for pregnant women and children enrolled in Head Start and children enrolled in child care.

What Is the Role of a Dental Hygienist Liaison?

DHLs provide a communication link between NCECHW and Head Start programs in their state. DHLs work with local organizations to solve problems related to access to oral health care for pregnant women and children. They also share information about promoting oral health and preventing oral disease with program staff and families.

How Can Dental Hygienist Liaisons Promote Oral Health?

DHLs can help in the following ways:

- Provide a communication link between NCECHW and Head Start and child care agencies in their states.
- Collaborate with state organizations such as oral health programs, Head Start Collaboration Offices, and child care agencies.
- Provide oral health presentations at state conferences and meetings.
- Offer strategies to improve access to oral health care for pregnant women and children.
- Work with oral health professionals to establish partnerships with local Head Start and child care programs to provide staff education and training.
- Share information about the importance of oral health and of regular oral health visits, good nutrition and oral hygiene practices, and oral-injury-prevention strategies with program staff.
- Help Head Start staff identify and establish a dental home for pregnant women and children, and encourage pregnant women and parents of children to get all needed oral health care.
- Serve on Head Start health services advisory committees or oral health advisory boards/coalitions to promote oral health for pregnant women and children.
- Meet with state and local oral health professionals to share information about Head Start's commitment to oral health and about assistance available to help program participants get oral health care.



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness