



Dental Health Services Victoria

Promoting oral health in disability Day Services

2012-13 report



dental health
services victoria
oral health for better health

Promoting oral health in Day Services

In 2012–13, Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to offer small grants to Day Services across Victoria interested in developing ways to promote oral health.

This initiative gave Day Services the flexibility to propose actions suited to the needs of the individuals accessing that service. DHSV worked with each service to develop a tailored project plan bursting with strategies for better oral health.

“This grant was a spark. We recognise that culture change is not instant and that making BDS a healthier place is a long-term project. However, this project was a really good catalyst and there have been several great flow-on effects.”

Broadmeadows Disability Service

A big year in 2012–13

Twelve projects were implemented in 2012–13, involving 21 Day Services and well over 560 service users. Many more support workers, families and other community members also played a role.

Some of the excellent work included:

- planting edible gardens to promote eating fresh vegetables and fruit
- encouraging clients to drink more tap water by installing water fountains, providing refillable water bottles and keeping water in the fridge
- creating a large mosaic of oral health messages
- changing service practices and policies to include healthy eating, drinking more water and better oral hygiene
- integrating oral health into existing cooking, health and art programs
- oral health education workshops for staff, parents and service users linked to local dental agencies
- a Day Service film-making group producing a DVD about visiting the dentist.

Day Service staff were overwhelmingly supportive of the opportunity to address this clear health and wellbeing concern, and reported that parents and clients were also keen participants.

Given a successful first year, this format is being repeated in 2013–14. This work is in line with the goals of the *Healthy Together Victoria – Action plan for oral health promotion 2013–2017*.





Where to next?

The work continues in 2013–14 with a number of new and exciting projects approved for funding.

We have gathered even more resources to offer Day Services and are also looking to produce an Easy English resource. We hope to be able to share some of the stories and resources from this project soon via the DHSV website.

Funding was secured for the Australian Population Health Improvement Research Strategy for Oral Health (APHIRST – Oral Health) to evaluate the 2012–13 and 2013–14 years of the project. It is hoped we can add to the evidence base for work with this at-risk group.

Success stories

Mecwacare, Malvern East

To encourage water as the drink of choice, clients each received a water bottle. Water bottle carriers allow the water bottles to travel to all activities and ensure a thirst-quenching drink is always close at hand. The Mecwacare Project Manager reported that clients “love it” and that this strategy has made a “huge difference” to the drinks being consumed. Mecwacare is seeing great peer encouragement to drink more water and less juice poppers.

In addition, a group of Mecwacare’s stars scripted, acted in, filmed and edited a very entertaining video about a visit to the dentist. They also extended an existing garden bed and used the produce in the cooking program. Oral health and hygiene has now been included in their ‘All about me’ program outline. Incorporating oral health into existing programs means that this topic will continue to be covered for all clients in the future.

Parents and carers were kept well-informed about all the good work with regular pieces in the ‘Fisher Street Sun’ newsletter

“The activities were enjoyed by all and became part of the general discussions and conversations for the month and beyond. Some people continue to tell us that they have cleaned their teeth in the morning, a practice which had previously not been the case.”

Shepparton Access

Vista Day Services, Morwell

This group researched and created a spectacular mosaic showing key oral health messages. This fantastic artwork will be put on permanent display.

Staff initially had some questions about the project, but once it began there was good support and staff successfully incorporated oral health across many of the program areas. One group made a dental themed snakes and ladders and, through gardening and cooking programs, veggies made their way from paddock to plate.

Clients at Vista were encouraged to drink tap water to receive the benefits of fluoride. Tap water jugs were kept in the fridge and used at lunchtime – a simple, yet successful strategy to increase water consumption.

All 70 clients of all abilities were involved in the oral health project in some way.

“The gardens produced an abundance of produce which also enabled clients to take home vegetables to be used in their cooking at home. Clients enjoyed learning about oral hygiene and have improved their knowledge.”
(Connecting Skills Australia, Frankston)

For more information about the Promoting Oral Health in disability Day Services project, please contact Bonnie Morrison at Dental Health Services Victoria: bonnie.morrison@dhsv.org.au | 9341 1721.

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