To All Nebraska Community Dental Disease Prevention Programs;

Thank you all for joining the Webex call on 27 October that was hosted by the DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry (OOHD) in partnership with the Nebraska Infection Control Assessment and Promotion Program (ICAP). We would like to send this follow up safety message out to all the health departments who manage “Oral Health Access for Young Children” or “Nebraska Teeth Forever (NTF)” community dental programs. These local projects offer vital educational, preventive and referral dental services, provided by public health hygienists and community health workers, within child centers, schools and older adult facility settings. COVID-19 has brought new challenges to many of these settings, causing a recent reduction in access to care, especially for children and older adults in rural communities, who often have higher rates of untreated decay. It is critical to preserve these essential preventive dental services during the current pandemic. Loss of these early interventions can bring about an increase in dental disease and health disparity in our communities.

We encourage directors, principals, administrators, parents and caregivers to continue to participate in these events with the assurance that health department dental care personnel can safely provide these services by utilizing current infection control (IC) measures, including use of personal protective equipment by staff. It is imperative to coordinate closely with the local school nurses and long-term care providers on these issues to continue to deliver the necessary preventative care and treatment that so many individuals urgently need.

The Nebraska ICAP team is working with the OOHD community dental programs to keep the public safe from COVID-19 transmission and still provide the necessary access to essential preventive care such as dental screenings, toothbrush prophys, fluoride varnish, SDF placement, Glass Ionomer Sealants, education and referrals. The following best practice infection control actions are recommended to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in these community settings:

- Vaccination of all health department dental personnel.
- Develop written IC protocols for dental personnel based upon current CDC/OSHA recommendations.
- Screening for COVID-19 symptoms for all patients and dental personnel.
- Utilize universal IC precautions to include gowns, gloves, medical masks, and eye protection. (safety glasses and face shields) during treatment.
- Dental personnel source control (wearing masks) at all times
- Single use, disposable items, including mirrors and explorers should be used when possible:
  + Any time an item or instrument is re-used, it shall be properly cleaned and sterilized according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- Cleaning and disinfection of clinical and high touch surfaces will be done:
  + With an EPA List-N disinfectant that is effective against SARS-CoV-2.
  + The cleaning and disinfection will be done between each patient.

Dental personnel recognize that procedures that create spray and splashes, known as aerosol generating procedures (AGP), are more likely to spread COVID-19. Examples of these services include Cavitron Scaling, Slow Speed Prophy Cleanings and applying Resin-based Dental Sealants. Currently, it is not recommended for these programs to perform AGPs in community settings. If this recommendation changes in the future, these protocols will be reassessed.

Nebraska ICAP Infection Preventionists can assist the local health department dental personnel on how to create a comprehensive infection control policy. And, if requested, the ICAP team can provide direct community dental program on-site visits to help ensure the highest quality of safe care during the existing pandemic.

The Nebraska ICAP program continually monitors federal, state and county guidance to connect local dental care providers with the latest information on how to minimize the transmission of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of patients, staff and community members. Please feel free to contact our Dental or School specialists if you have any questions. More dental resources regarding COVID-19 prevention and general infection control can be found at [https://icap.nebraskamed.com/dental-facilities/](https://icap.nebraskamed.com/dental-facilities/)

Dental Infection Control Specialist:
Sarah Stream, MPH, CDA, FADAA
<sstream@nebraskamed.com>
#402-552-2431

School Infection Control Specialist:
Christina Cashatt, RN, BSN, CIC
ccashatt@nebraskamed.com
#402-559-9481

Please let ICAP and the OOHD know how we can further assist your programs!

Richard Hankins, MD
Assistant Professor
Department of Infectious Diseases
University of Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, Nebraska 68198

Charles F. Craft, DDS
State Dental Health Director
DHHS Nebraska
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Helping People Live Better Lives