

Smart Bites

Fall 2007

Oral Health Awareness Colorado! has been an active participant in the assuring dental services are included in the **Blue Ribbon Commission** for Health Care Reform's recommendations. As of mid- November, the Commission plans on recommending that an adult dental benefit be added to Medicaid and enhancements be made to CHP+ and Medicaid to better meet the needs of children. A full outline of the recommendations impacting access to oral health care will be forthcoming in our next "Legislative Alert".

Based on the success with the Blue Ribbon Commission, OHAC! is in the process of requesting two pieces of **legislation** for the 2008 legislative session: the **adult dental benefit for Medicaid** and **enhancements to CHP+ and Medicaid for children**. We will be seeking the testimony of oral health professionals and consumers of services with stories to tell at the legislative hearings. It is important that "real people" come forward to explain how the legislation will have real impact on their lives.

OHAC! and the Colorado Oral Health Network (COHN) received word in October that our joint grant proposal to **Caring for Colorado was not funded**. The organization continues to prioritize the direct provision of services to individuals rather than advocacy efforts. OHAC! has received preliminary word that our proposal to the **Colorado Health Foundation will not receive funding** as well. Thus, we will be looking for creative solutions to continue to meet the objectives of our coalition.

This fall, two **Community Conversations on Oral Health** were conducted in Craig and Montrose. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss the unique needs of these communities and how OHAC! and the communities can collaborate to assure access to oral health care. OHAC! plans to hold a total of six conversations by July.

The 2007 **evaluation of OHAC!** shows that the coalition continues to grow and develop. Most of the factors associated with successful coalitions are in place and are known to our members. Additionally, our members appear to be more satisfied and knowledgeable about elements of our organization. A stakeholder survey is currently underway to assess knowledge and use of the Colorado oral health plan and awareness of OHAC! This will help us to assess the reach and impact of the organizations as well as provide future direction.

To better share information about oral health initiatives around the state, OHAC! will be contacting our member organizations to **collect data on "success stories"**. We will continue to feature these stories on our website (www.beasmartmouth.com) and hope to create a database for easy reference. Additionally, this data collection will assist us in identifying how we are meeting the objectives of the state oral health plan. We hope you will take the time to partner with OHAC! on this important project.

We want to welcome our **two newest members**, the *Autism Society of Colorado* and *Northwest Colorado Visiting Nurses Association*, to OHAC!

Please send information or suggestions for this newsletter to Deborah Colburn at md@beasmartmouth.com