



Oral Health  
Program to  
Engage  
Non-Dental Health  
& Human Service  
Workers in  
Integrated  
Dental  
Education

**OPENWIDE** is a statewide oral health training program for non-dental health and human services providers, including physicians, nurses, nutritionists, childcare and outreach workers, and others.

OPENWIDE training is designed to:

- Educate, build awareness and integrate oral health into existing health systems
- Enable non-dental providers to recognize and understand oral diseases and conditions
- Enable non-dental providers to engage in anticipatory guidance and prevention interventions, and make appropriate referral for improved oral health
- Make a positive impact on overall health and well-being through improved oral health.

Oral diseases and disorders are highly prevalent, and may gravely impact general health and well-being. Oral disease, in the form of dental decay, is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and is five times more prevalent than asthma. Dental decay and gum disease are painful transmittable infectious diseases that have been linked to low birth weight, cardiovascular conditions, cancer, diabetes, poor nutrition, speech impairments, and psychosocial problems. Oral disease has been reported among the most common reasons for children's absence from and poor performance in school. The epidemic prevalence and severe impact of oral diseases and disorders, and the relative lack of oral health care access for low income and minority populations, are priority public health concerns.

For historical reasons, the mouth and teeth have become separated from the rest of the body, their care being relegated virtually exclusively to the dental profession. An emerging awareness of the nature and severity of diseases and disorders in the mouth and their serious implications for overall health, as well as a nation-wide crisis in access to oral health care for populations with the most prevalent and advanced disease, has made it imperative that all health professionals engage more fully in oral health promotion and disease prevention. **The Department of Public Health's OPENWIDE project is an important step toward accomplishing this goal.**

**OPEN WIDE** is a comprehensive multi-media program that includes:

- Calibrated and standardized **trainer training**
- Trainers **slide guides** with presentation script in English and Spanish
- Full-color **custom binders**
- 70-page **modular curricula**, with sections on:
  - Dental Decay
  - Early Childhood Caries
  - Risk Factors for Dental Disease
  - Prevention
  - What To Do and How To Do It
  - Other modules in development: Detection and Prevention of Oral Cancer, Oral Health and the Older Adult, and Oral-Facial Injury Prevention.
- **Laminated** full-color **fact sheets** and clinical guides for quick-reference
- Extensive **Appendices** with a broad range of resources
- **CD's** with a 45-minute slide presentation on Early Childhood Caries (ECC) and over 50 additional slides for customizing presentations, all in English and Spanish
- Continuous-loop **VCR tapes**, in English and Spanish, for clients and caregivers to view in waiting rooms. A rigorous evaluation protocol has been implemented to: assure effectiveness of the curriculum and the training methodology in achieving OPEN WIDE goals, and identify strengths and weaknesses in OPEN WIDE as guidance for needed modification and enhancement.

OPEN WIDE is a major part of an expansive Department of Public Health oral health promotion and disease prevention program that, as a whole, forms a ***comprehensive public health strategy for the prevention of dental decay, oral diseases & disorders in Connecticut's children and their families***. These components include the creation of a statewide, integrated, culturally appropriate, and targeted:

- Social **marketing** and **media** program that builds awareness and changes attitudes about oral health across the life span, to inform programs, policy, and practice.
- **Education** program that builds awareness, knowledge and skills, in order to promote oral health and reduce risk behaviors for oral diseases and conditions.
- Dental decay prevention through increased placement of **sealants**.

For further information regarding OPEN WIDE and related oral public health activities, contact:

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