

Healthy Smiles for Employability Program Implementation

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The Near Eastside (NES) Indianapolis community is subject to several negative social determinants of oral health, including low income, which can impede access to oral health care and put residents at a higher risk for oral health problems. The Indiana University School of Dentistry's (IUSD) Healthy Smiles for Employability (HSE) program aims to improve oral health, well-being, and employment outcomes in the NES and neighboring communities by providing dentures to low-income and uninsured residents and connecting them with local agencies that provide job assistance services. Program components of HSE include (1) program organization, (2) community engagement, (3) participant recruitment and enrollment, (4) dental and employment services, and (5) program evaluation. Eligible HSE candidates include individuals who are unemployed or underemployed (i.e. income below 200% federal poverty line), seeking to improve their job situation, and perceive the appearance of their teeth (i.e. missing front teeth) as a barrier for greater employment opportunities. Based on the Stages of Change model, HSE targets individuals in an "action" phase who are seeking employment and trying to improve their employment situation. Enrolled HSE participants receive non-denture dental services at the IUSD-Student Outreach Clinic located in the NES at HealthNet People's Health and Dental Center and denture services at the IUSD Clinic. Collaboration with community organizations such as John H. C. Boner Center, Wheeler Mission, People's Health and Dental Center, and others serves as an immense asset to recruit HSE candidates, provide job advancement and retention services, social services and other essential resources to HSE participants. Ongoing program evaluation serves to increase program effectiveness and organization in order to support the success of HSE including its community partners and participants.

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