Reimaging Oral Health
Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council

Did you know that results of a Community Needs Assessment of 600 citizens in Chatham County in 2020 found that:

- Only 56% of adults 18 and over visited a dentist in the past 12 months.
- 22% of adults 65 and older had lost all teeth.
- 72% of adults 18 and over reported not having any or adequate dental insurance.
- 11% of adults visited a local emergency room for dental pain and care.
- 76% of adults would like to see a dentist more frequently, mainly for preventive services.
- 68% do not seek proper dental care due to high costs.
- 24% report the possibility of needing dentures.
- 89% would use free or low-cost dental services.
- 38% would only use free services.
- The percent of White adults 20+ with untreated dental caries is 23.7%.
- The percent of Black/African American adults 20+ with untreated dental caries is 43.6%.
- The percent of Hispanic adults 20+ with untreated dental caries is 36.7%.

(Source: Oral Health Chatham County Needs Assessment July 2020. Waters College of Health Professions, Georgia Southern University, and National Center for Health Statistic. Health, United States, 2018-Data Finder. www.cdc.gov. Accessed December 10, 2020)

What are the main issues regarding oral health?

- Poor oral health can lead to poor mental health and low self-esteem.
- Some with poor oral health may shy away from searching for or applying for jobs because they are insecure about their appearance.
- Populations at risk due to other disparities are at higher risk for poor oral health.
- Dental health has become less important due to the separation from primary medical care.
- Cost continues to prevent many in Chatham County from accessing regular, professional dental care.
- Lack of insurance coverage prevents access to dental service by many adults.

How will the Planning Council help with issues of oral health?

1. Increase access to oral health and eliminate difficulties in finding affordable or free care.
   - Event – annual free adult public dental event supported by volunteer staff.
   - Network – local provider network to offer free dental services in their office by referrals.
2. Prevent disease and promote oral health.
   - Partner with public, community, and governmental events to provide education and referral services.
   - Partner with youth organizations to create "first generation change makers" – empower kids and teens to promote change and improve oral health within their families.

3. Increase the amount of oral health information available and improve the understanding of oral health issues.
- Brand– create marketing messages to improve oral health.
- Public relations – create public service announcements and use social media to promote awareness.
- Champions – recognizable and trusted voices and faces as "oral health champions" and develop educational messaging.

4. Integrate oral health and primary care.
- Dental Navigators – connect dental patients with medical, behavioral health and social service providers.
- Promote the practice of including general medical care and dental care Savannah's Federally Qualified Health Centers: Curtis V. Cooper Primary Health Care, Inc and J. C. Lewis Primary Health Care Center.

5. Advance oral health public policy and research.
- Work with others to lobby Medicaid to improve dental benefits for adults.
- Develop, adopt, or improve upon existing oral health information and services.
- Improve monitoring and reporting regarding available services and usage.

What are existing dental services?

Services offered include preventive cleanings, deep cleanings, sealants, oral cancer screenings, fillings, extractions, and dentures. Located at 106 East Broad Street, Savannah, GA 31401, 912-527-100, hours of operation, Mon-Thu 7:45 am – 5:00 pm and Fri 7:45 am – 2:00 pm.

Services offered include preventive cleanings, deep cleanings, sealants, oral cancer screenings, fillings, extractions, and dentures. Located at Annex, 5 Mall, Savannah, GA 31406, 912-495-8887, Mon-Tue 8:00 am – 7:00 pm, Wed-Thu 8:00 am-5:00 pm, and Fri 8:00 am – 12:00 noon.

The Chatham County Health Department dental services program provides comprehensive dental care for children ages 0-17 (Chatham County) with an emphasis on cavity prevention. Services offered include, exams, cleanings, sealants, fillings, extractions, X-rays, fluoride treatments, and caries risk assessment. Located at 1395 Eisenhower, Savannah, GA 31406, 912-356-2441, Mon-Wed 8:00 am – 5:00 pm (closed 12-1), Thu 8:00 am-7:00 pm (closed 12-1), and Fri 8:00 am – 2:00 pm. Reduced fees are available based on proof of income which should be presented at the first visit. We also accept Medicaid, Amerigroup, Peach State, WellCare, and CareSource.

The Savannah Volunteer Dental Clinic (opening soon) is a dedicated group of volunteers from the dental community seeking to provide for unmet needs in a vulnerable population. The clinic services children from ages 3-18 who do not have federal, state, or private insurance. 912-429-8368, Fri 9:00am – 12:00pm.