

Access to Oral Care

BACKGROUND

Oral health is essential to a person's overall health and well-being. However, lack of access to oral health care contributes to profound oral health disparities and remains a public health challenge. Access to oral care is hampered by a variety of social, cultural, economic, structural, and geographic factors with varying opportunities in public health dentistry to reduce barriers. According to the Community Needs Study Survey, approximately 20% of the Lehigh Valley population and 10% of Quakertown residents have not visited a dentist or dental clinic in over five years. Income was reported as being the single largest predictor of access to dental care among residents. Furthermore, 18% of respondents report needing but forgoing dental care in the past year due to cost. Accordingly Healthy People 2020 indicates objectives to increase the proportion of adults, as well as children and adolescents, who use oral health care services by improving access to oral preventive services.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase the proportion of adults who utilize oral health care services (Healthy People 2020).
- Reduce the proportion of adults with untreated dental decay and permanent tooth extraction due to dental caries or periodontal disease (HP 2020).
- Increase the proportion of adults who receive preventive interventions in dental facilities including oral cancer screenings and health education (HP 2020).
- Reduce or eliminate disparities in oral health.