

United States Public Health Service

DENTAL NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Dental Professional Advisory Committee
Volume V, Issue 1
February 2005 Challenges to Dental Public Health
Agency Perspective

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PART I: AGENCY LEADER PERSPECTIVES: CHALLENGES TO DENTAL
PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEETING THOSE CHALLENGES

Editors Note: This is the first in a series of articles examining the current issues that affect the USPHS Dental Category, how these issues are being addressed, and the future challenges and opportunities we face. The series begins with this issue, as the editors asked and received feedback from the Clinical Directors from various agencies/OPDIVs – CAPT Chris Halliday, Indian Health Service; CAPT Nick Makrides, Federal Bureau of Prisons; CAPT Deborah Noyes, U.S. Coast Guard; CAPT Carolyn Tylenda Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; RADM Bill Maas, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

[excerpt]

Halliday - Since the mid-1950's, the Indian Health Service dental program has maintained a system for monitoring oral health and estimating the treatment needs of the American Indian and Alaska Native patients. The monitoring system has provided community leaders and program planners with a wide range of information on the oral health status of the American Indian and Alaska Native population. The oral health disparities of the American Indian and Alaska Native people are profound when compared to the general United States population. Studies have shown that fewer American Indian and Alaska Native children have experienced tooth decay and a greater percentage of older adults have lost all of their teeth. Additionally, American Indian and Alaska Native people have more severe periodontal disease partially due to the high prevalence of diabetes. American Indians and Alaska Natives suffer levels of oral disease that are in many instances much greater than the general United States population. Studies have shown that fewer American Indian and Alaska Native children have experienced tooth decay and a greater percentage of older adults have lost all of their teeth. Additionally, American Indian and Alaska Native people have more severe periodontal disease partially due to the high prevalence of diabetes. American Indians and Alaska Natives suffer levels of oral disease that are in many instances much greater than the general United States population. The Indian Health Service is the primary health care advocate and health care provider to the American Indian and Alaska Native people. Our mission is to raise the health status of the populations we serve to the highest

possible level, ensure personal and public health services to Indian people, uphold the Federal government's obligations to Indian people, and to honor and protect the inherent sovereign rights of tribes.