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TO: Local Health Directors
Local Public Health Dental Program Staff

THRU: Dennis Harrington, Chief *DHH*
Administrative, Local and Community Support Section

FROM: Joy F. Reed, EdD, RN *JFR*
Head, Local Technical Assistance and Training

DATE: July 10, 2003

SUBJECT: Policies for Local Public Health Dental Clinics

Based on the number of questions we have received from local staff and consultants on the appropriate policies for dental clinics in local health departments, we are providing the following guidance to all local health departments:

Local health departments are different from other dental practices in two major ways, both of which impact the clients that the dental clinic must serve. First, because it is a public health dental clinic, your clinic is exempt from the requirement to be separately licensed as a dental practice (thereby saving the local health department both the direct and indirect costs associated with that process.) Second as a public health agency, your agency is a cost-based provider; through the cost settlement process you are reimbursed the actual cost of providing services, including dental services. As a result of those two factors, you are required to serve those most in need – those at or below 100% of federal poverty level. You should apply a sliding fee scale to those below 100% of federal poverty level, but that sliding fee scale does not have to slide to zero (e.g., it could slide to a minimum fee of \$20.00.) However, you cannot refuse to provide services to anyone below 100% of federal poverty level who is unable to pay that minimum fee.

Your clinic may, of course, serve those with Medicaid coverage but you may not serve only those clients (see above.) You may also serve those above 100% of federal poverty level and those with other insurance coverage, but that would be optional.

cc: Leah Devlin
Rick Mumford

