

The Intersection of Oral Health and Hypertension

Blood Pressure Pilot Project Results, Year 3
September 1, 2020 – August 31, 2021



Background

In North Dakota, nearly 1 in 3 (29.8%) adults are diagnosed with hypertension.¹ Hypertension, or high blood pressure (BP), increases the risk of heart disease and stroke if left uncontrolled. Sometimes known as the “silent killer,” it often has no symptoms and requires screening to detect it.

Due to the interconnected nature of oral health and overall health, public health programs promote coordination between dental and medical providers. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding allows the North Dakota Oral Health Program (ND OHP) to support BP screening and referral processes that address hypertension in dental offices. The pilot project will continue through August 2023.

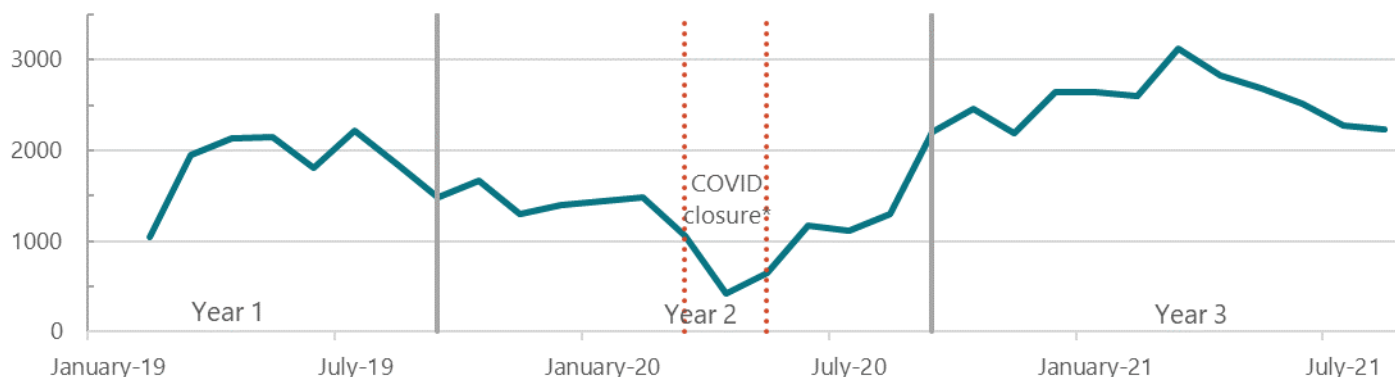
The ND OHP partners with dental providers to provide BP screenings and bidirectional referrals for adults. Participating dental offices receive training on BP measurement, then screen patients for high BP, referring people with a high reading to medical providers. Providers follow up on referrals to determine if the patient sought care and received a diagnosis. Through this process, the ND OHP’s goal is to increase detection and treatment of high BP, in turn preventing complications of this disease.

30,398
blood pressure screenings in Year 3.

High blood pressures detected and referred to primary care in Year 3.

- high BP readings: 4,223
- referrals: 582
- referral & follow-up: 191

Blood pressure screenings by partner dental providers each month.



*From 3/20/2020 to 5/5/2020, dental offices were closed to non-emergency services.

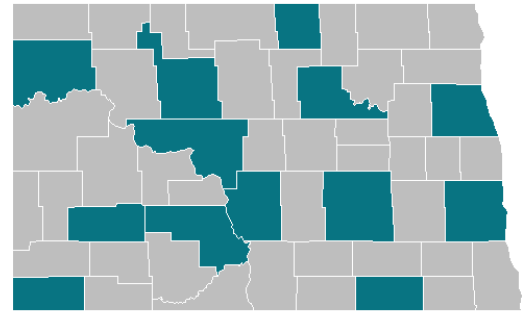


Participating Dental Practices

Statewide, 14 dental offices participate in the BP pilot project. The ND OHP targets dental practices located in areas with high hypertension rates to participate in the project, but all dental practices are eligible and encouraged to be involved. Types of dental offices include Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), nonprofit dental clinics, Indian Health Service (IHS) clinics, and private practices.

Year 3:
6 new offices (14 total)
46 new staff (121 total)

North Dakota counties with dental offices participating in the blood pressure pilot.



Blood Pressure Training

Year 3:

6 new trainings (16 total)
2 refresher trainings (2 total)
65 people trained (140 total)

New dental offices receive BP training, prior to beginning screenings and refresher trainings are available for continuing dental offices. Trainings cover the following topics:

- Why BP assessment is important in the dental office setting
- The goals of the ND OHP BP Project
- How to take an accurate BP reading and correctly categorize it
- How to handle a patient with high BP and make a referral
- How to integrate BP measurement into workflow



Implementation

Once trained, dental office staff provide BP screenings to all adult patients using a protocol developed by the ND OHP. If a patient has a high BP reading, they are referred to a medical practice for a second screening and possible treatment. Dental office staff have reported detecting patients in hypertensive crisis, which is when a blood pressure reads 180/20 or greater. The role dental office staff provide in BP screening and referral is critical and may even save lives.

210%
increase in screenings
from Year 2.



Sustainability

During Year 3, the ND OHP assessed and began planning for program sustainability. Currently, all dental providers indicated that they plan to continue providing BP screenings upon project completion. A sustainability assessment revealed high sustainability scores for the program in areas such as engaged staff, leadership, and stakeholders; organizational readiness; workflow integration; implementation and training; monitoring and evaluation; and outcomes and effectiveness. The ND OHP used these results to create a sustainability plan and promote long-term implementation of BP screenings.

Credits

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¹North Dakota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2019



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