



Healthy Seniors Dental Program

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Healthy Seniors Dental Program

OVERVIEW OF THE BEST PRACTICE

Our Best Practice is the Healthy Seniors Dental Program, which addresses our residents' dental hygiene. With this program, a local dentist and hygienist provide services onsite. The program benefits numerous departments. From a nursing aspect, it reduces the risk of oral infection and related antibiotic usage, reduces the risk of weight loss and respiratory illness related to poor oral hygiene, and allows missing/broken dentures to be replaced onsite. From a social aspect, it improves residents' self-esteem and dignity related to good oral hygiene. Also, it reduces the amount of transportation that would be required to take residents to dental appointments.

BENEFITS OF AN ONSITE DENTAL PROGRAM

The Healthy Seniors Dental Program offers many benefits to the enrolled residents. Under the program, residents receive routine dental cleanings including extractions, if necessary. Residents who have been enrolled in the program for at least six months will be allowed to utilize the denture benefit, which includes an initial set of dentures as well as denture replacement and repair if the dentures are lost or broken.

Nursing

From a nursing standpoint, the program improves the residents' oral hygiene thereby reducing the risk of oral infection and related antibiotic usage as well as the risk of weight loss. Since 2013, the dental program at our facility has provided 82 appointments related to dentures and 56 appointments related to extractions and debridement.

Social

Obtaining routine dental care improves the overall dental hygiene of the resident thereby improving the self-esteem and dignity of the resident. Likewise, residents who have the ability to obtain dentures through the dental program are likely to have improved self-esteem by having a more confident smile than when they were edentulous. Another social benefit of an onsite program is that residents are seen in the comfort of their own home, which helps reduce the anxiety that some residents face when leaving the facility to attend appointments. Similarly, another social benefit is that residents are seen in their own wheelchair, which eliminates the need for residents to transfer into a traditional dental chair. This is truly beneficial for residents who have difficulty with transfers.

Transportation

Having an onsite dental program significantly improves the strain placed on families and the facility to transport residents to appointments. A sample of 100 policyholders who have been enrolled in the Healthy Seniors Dental Program across the state of Alabama for around five years was taken to analyze the benefits of an onsite dental program in nursing facilities. Over the course of the five years, the dental program provided 1,938 various services to the selection of residents analyzed.¹ Having an onsite dental program eliminated the need for transportation for nearly 2,000 procedures as well as having to provide extra staffing to assist residents to and from dental appointments outside the facilities involved.

COST OF AN ONSITE DENTAL PROGRAM

Oftentimes, residents and their family members are hesitant to enroll in the dental program because they are under the impression that there will be an out-of-pocket charge related to the program. However, residents and their families are relieved to find out that the dental program premium is paid through a reduction in the resident's financial liability to the facility, instead of being incurred as an out-of-pocket cost to the resident.² Just as there is no out-of-pocket cost to the resident for enrolling in the program, there is no out-of-pocket cost for the facility to provide the Healthy Seniors Dental Program. Through the program, a local dentist and hygienist provide all the necessary tools and equipment for each dental clinic. The facility does not have to provide any medical supplies for the onsite dental clinics.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING AN ONSITE DENTAL PROGRAM

There are a few potential challenges that other facilities might face while implementing an onsite dental program. The facility will need staff members with knowledge of the overall program to properly explain it to families and residents, staff members to assist in completing application to enroll residents in the program, and staff member to coordinate with the dental team prior to upcoming visits. Staff members will also be necessary to transport the residents to and from the clinic area on the day of the visit to ensure the clinic runs smoothly. Likewise, teamwork between nursing and the dental team will be required to ensure residents receive proper care and follow up. The facility will also need a space to fit all dental equipment necessary, including electric plugs and running water. The clinic may also need a geri-chair, stools, table for dental equipment, and regular chair.

¹The services provided to the 100 policyholders were as follows:

Examinations and Follow-up Visits: 667

Regular Cleanings, Debridement, and Denture Cleanings: 534

Extractions: 280

New Dentures and Partial Dentures: 64

Denture Adjustments, Realignment, Repairs, Rebases and Other Denture-Related Services: 282

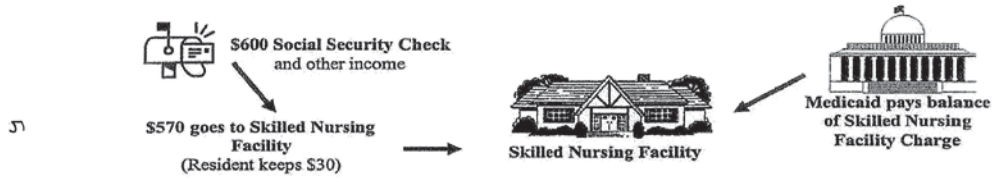
X-Rays: 61

Fillings and Other Tooth Restoration Procedures: 50

² For a full illustration of how the dental program premiums are paid see the chart on page 5.

Medicaid Resident Participation

Resident without Dental Insurance



Resident with Dental Insurance



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