



Keys to Success - Released in October 2016

# Using Data to Manage for Success in Safety Net Dental Programs

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Creating, maintaining and managing an efficient and effective safety net dental program is a continuous quality improvement process. The environment in which safety net dental programs operate is dynamic and ever-changing, and programs need to be adept at quickly identifying and responding to new challenges and opportunities. The way to do this is by continuously monitoring dental program performance and responding immediately to negative trends or new challenges to the successful attainment of program goals. Managing for success depends on the ability to generate accurate and timely program data, to analyze that data effectively and be willing and able to drive change within the dental program in response to that data.

Using practice data, successful managers will create a business plan for the dental program that shows the department how to achieve and maintain financial sustainability, maximize patient access and achieve meaningful and measurable quality outcomes. This business plan should be a living document that is regularly reviewed and shared with dental program staff to create a culture of accountability, buy-in and success.

The following is a list of the key practice data that dental programs should regularly collect and analyze to monitor performance:

- Number of visits
- Number of unduplicated patients
- Number of new patients
- Gross charges
- Net revenue (including all sources of revenue)
- Payer and patient mix
- Total expenses (direct and indirect)
- Emergency rate
- Broken appointment rate
- Transactions (procedures by ADA code)
- Percentage of completed treatments
- Percentage of children needing sealants who received sealants
- Number of FTE providers (dentists and hygienists)
- Aging report (amount of money owed to the practice past 90 days by patients and 3rd party insurers)

Programs with multiple clinical sites should generate and analyze this data for each site to understand how well each site is performing.

Setting realistic and achievable goals is crucial to effective dental program management. Goals are related to access (total number of visits, number of unduplicated patients, number of new patients), provider productivity

(visits/day, procedures/visit and revenue/day), quality outcomes (percentage of completed treatments, percentage of children who needed sealants who got them) and financial outcomes (gross charges, net revenue, bottom line).

Once goals have been determined, regular collection and analysis of data enables dental leadership to ensure that the dental program is achieving success in these important performance metrics. The keys to creating a culture of accountability within the dental program are to 1) continuously monitor and analyze performance; 2) provide regular feedback to staff: rewarding success and coaching setbacks; 3) engage staff in establishing goals and developing solutions to setbacks; 4) always lead by example; and 5) make it fun!

*Click the attachment to download a helpful data tracking tool.*

**File attachment:**

Dental Performance Tracking\_2015.xlsx