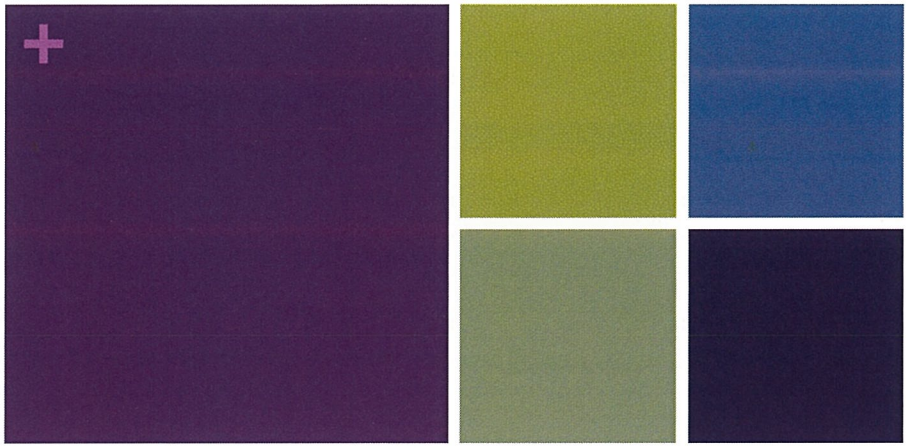

Mary Altenberg MS CHES

Executive Director, Community Dental Services
Albuquerque, NM
NM Health & Human Services Committee
Santa Fe, NM – December 19, 2013

Mary Altenberg MS CHES

2

- Executive Director – Community Dental Services, Albuquerque, NM
- Former NM Dept. of Health, Health Systems Bureau Chief
- IHS Dental Support Center Director
- BA and MS – University of New Mexico
- Committed to improving the quality and access to healthcare services in NM for over 15 years.

About Community Dental Services

3

- Located in Albuquerque, yet serves people throughout the state
  - Established in 1974
  - 3 clinic locations
  - One of only a few clinics seeing low and no income patients.
- Provide full range of dental services from prevention to complex treatment, as well orthodontic services. We also serve emergency patients every day, at every clinic. Our patients
  - Over 11,000 patients served annually
  - Over 100 emergency patients weekly
  - Children, adults, elders come to CDS ---- because they may have no where else to go
  - DDSD and Veterans
  - From throughout NM, rural, tribal, underserved NM communities
  - No dental insurance, Medicaid, low-income
- Our Mission – To provide quality care to individuals who might not otherwise have access to dental treatment because of their inability to pay.
- We employ a total of 40: 6 dentists, 5 hygienists, 14 dental assistants, 1 lab tech, 9 clinic support staff, and 5 administrators.

Future of Community Dental Services

4

- Challenges CDS faces
  - Need is huge and growing
    - Reductions in state funding
    - Medicaid rates remaining the same for years
    - Cost of providing dentistry has grown, but not the reimbursement system.
  - Dentist recruitment and retention
    - Cost of dentist, number of dentists interested in working in public health, and remaining in public health
  - Low-income, uninsured population
  - Meeting patients' unique needs, work, family commitments
  - Providers that understand patients
- To meet future and growing demand, need quality, mid-level providers that understand the patients needs and can provide routine prevention and treatment.

Dental Therapists: A Good Access & Business Model

5

- IHS Dental Support Centers
  - Inaugural director of the Albuquerque Area Dental Support Center - 2000
  - Alaska Area Dental Support Center – Dental Therapist program development
- DTs Generate Revenue -Alaska and Minnesota dental therapists ***are Economically Viable; Cost Employers Less Than 30 Cents for Every Dollar They Generate when serving only low-income patients***
- Save $$$ - MN Example:
  - DDS Cost $75/hr vs. DT cost $45/hr.
  - One DT provides restorative care to 1,500 low income children and pregnant women/yr.
  - **= Total cost savings w/DT $1,200/wk, $62,000/yr**
- MN Children's Dental Services – DTs such an important part of dental team, paying tuition for DT students in return for practicing at clinics.

Dental Therapists at CDS

6

- Part of our dental team
- Training and education site for dental therapist students who come from underserved communities – we already have a history of "growing our own".
- Practice – employ DTs to provide routine prevention and treatment for children and adults
- Allows dentists the time to do higher level, complex work
- Increase access to services for our patients
- Generate revenue and cost savings so we can continue to provide services to NM underserved

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- THANK YOU -

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7