



Mary Altenberg MS CHES

Executive Director, Community Dental Services
Albuquerque, NM
NM Economic & Rural Development Committee
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+ Mary Altenberg MS CHES



- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

