

PEP student directs implementation of Ohio's first in-school dental clinic

✓✓✓ October 15, 2013 by Bri Loesch | CPH Communications

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Paul Rudolph, a student in the college's Program for Experienced Professionals ([PEP](#)), played a vital role in the opening of the first self-sustaining, in-school dental clinic in Ohio.

As director of the Children's Oral Health Network (COHN) in Cincinnati, Rudolph develops population health management solutions for children. He has worked to build up dental infrastructure and improve community engagement.

As dentistry is the most prevalent unmet health care need for children in the city, public health dentistry is in a transformative period with new infrastructure under development to increase its capacity.

As this mission started by the Junior League of Cincinnati (JLC) began to develop this past spring, one of the first to come on board was Rudolph's wife, Dr. Lisa Rudolph, a pediatric dentist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She engaged her husband as he was a health care analyst at the time, and he began to create an estimate of the community's unmet pediatric dental needs.

"Access to care is so important," Paul Rudolph said. "We need to ensure that medical care is a part of public health and that people are getting quality care when they need it."

As the initiative developed, COHN was formed to "create a seamless system of accessible, affordable oral health care for children ages 0-18 in Greater Cincinnati and to ensure a dental home for children by age 1." Growing Well Cincinnati, the network that supports health partnerships for Cincinnati Public Schools, facilitates the coalition of healthcare organizations.

As COHN members toured Oyler School, a Community Learning Center school in the Cincinnati area, they were able to see the number of health services offered in the school. The Community Learning Center

model has been incorporated throughout the Cincinnati Public School district to create campuses that strengthen the link between schools and communities.

They do this by providing a system of integrated partnerships and offer recreational, educational, social, health, civic and cultural opportunities for students, families and the community. Oyler School was equipped with a health center, vision center, preschool and other services. However, missing was dental services—until September.

With full-time staff provided by the Cincinnati Health Department, volunteer staff provided by the Cincinnati Dental Society's Oral Health Foundation, a grant from the Delta Dental Foundation, and aid from Procter & Gamble, the three-chair Delta Dental Center at Oyler School officially opened at the end of September.

"I think the most important thing is consistency," Paul Rudolph said. "To us, creating a dental home for students means that there's a provider that these kids know. The clinic is right by the lunchroom. When they're going to lunch they can stop by their dentist and say 'hi.' The consistent care these children are getting from dentists and other health staff is imperative in reinforcing the importance of health."

The health partnerships housed in Oyler School use insurance reimbursements and private support to fund the services.

Of the 32,000 students who attend Cincinnati Public Schools each year, an estimated 4,300 attend school every day with immediate dental treatment needs, according to screening statistics. This only includes treatment needs detected by non-dental healthcare professionals like the school nurse.

"We're starting to head out to rural counties nearby to do an assessment of what the communities' needs are, and who their partners are," Paul Rudolph said. "Creating access to care is all about using local partners and developing those relationships."

Throughout the development of this clinic concept, the COHN has worked to bring together health care organizations in Cincinnati to meet this unmet health need. They will be opening a second school-based dental clinic in April, which will be a four-chair clinic on a high school campus.

"It's a unique experience for me as a PEP student, because it's like I'm getting a Master of Public Health degree in the classroom and in real life," Paul Rudolph said. "It's really helpful to be able to apply what I'm learning inside and outside of the classroom simultaneously. I focus a lot of my school projects on the work I'm doing here."

- See more at: <http://cph.osu.edu/news/2013/10/pep-student-directs-implementation-ohio%E2%80%99s-first-school-dental-clinic#sthash.n10AuPmQ.dpuf>