




2023

Local Dental Hygiene Partnership

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Northwestern
Health Unit

www.nwhu.on.ca

Introduction

2023 marked the second year of the dental hygiene partnership between Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) and Mary Berglund Community Health Centre Hub (MBCHCH).

Good dental health is vital to overall health and well-being, and together we have positively impacted the dental health of many Ignace residents. More than 100 people have received regular dental hygiene services at no charge since 2022. The partnership has also increased local awareness of public dental programs and provided support for eligible residents to access dental care.

With no dental providers in Ignace, accessing dental care has always been a challenge for many residents. While some travel outside of the community for dental care, many do not have that ability and may not access regular dental care as a result.

Prior to the 2022 partnership, NWHU dental staff from other communities travelled to Ignace to provide services for over 20 years, including:

- Dental screening and preventive services at schools and daycares since 2001, and
- Preventive and treatment services for eligible clients at the NWHU dental clinic since 2010, with approximately 10-15 clinic days offered per year.

In 2021, NWHU renovated the Ignace dental clinic, resulting in a fully modernized, two operatory clinic and sterilization space. In 2022, NWHU and MBCHCH worked together to establish a part time (0.6FTE) dental hygienist position. Our first dental hygienist, Reanna, was a local Ignace resident and worked with us from January 2022 until mid-April 2023. In May 2023, we successfully recruited Katelyn, another dental hygienist from Ignace, to fill the position.



Providing dental screening and fluoride varnish to young clients.



Supporting Access to Dental Programs and Services

NWHU promotes publicly funded dental programs and services with a goal of increasing local awareness and reaching clients that are eligible for programs but not yet enrolled. Various communication channels are used for promotion, including posters, radio ads, newsletters, social media, community partners and service providers.

The dental hygienist provides individualized support to help all local clients access dental care. This includes assessing dental needs, reviewing program eligibility requirements, supporting completion of required paperwork, and facilitating access to care.

NWHU provides care to eligible clients who are enrolled in publicly funded dental programs, including:

- Healthy Smiles Ontario (ages 0-17);
- Green Door Project (ages 18-64); and
- Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (ages 65+).

Additionally, dental care is provided to eligible people on social programs, including:

- Ontario Works (OW);
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP); and
- Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB).

Each public dental program has unique eligibility requirements (Appendix 1). When a client is not eligible to enroll in a public dental program, they are offered suggestions as appropriate to support them in receiving care.

The dental hygienist also works closely with NWHU and MBCHCH staff to ensure that clients attending other appointments are offered free preventive dental services and receive information about public dental programs.



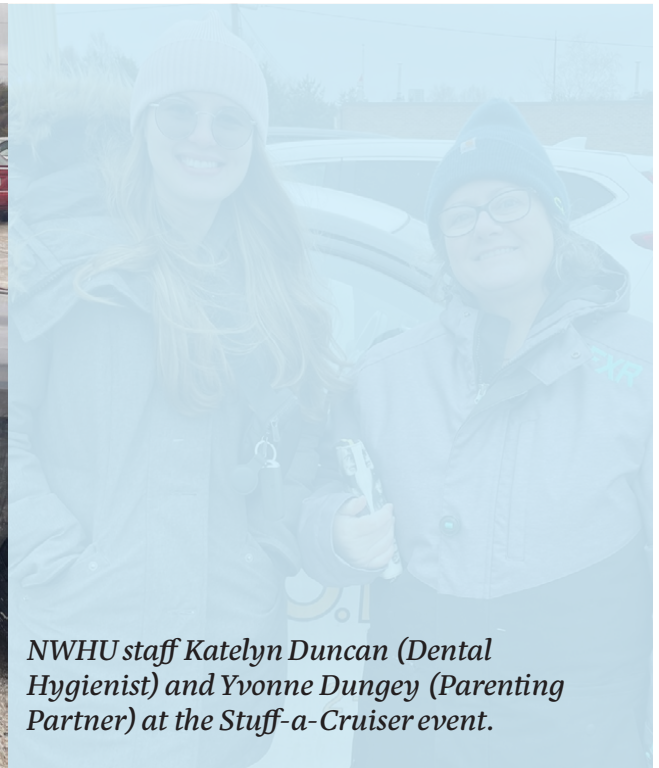
Community Outreach and Education

NWHU prioritizes community outreach work to empower people of all ages to learn about oral health, increase awareness of available programs and services, and receive support to navigate public dental programs. This important work builds relationships and can help lessen the anxiety that is commonly associated with dental care.

As a member of the local Healthy Communities Working Group (HCWG), the dental hygienist ensures that community partners and service providers receive up-to-date information about available dental programs and services, including how to refer people.

Community outreach work includes providing education and resources to support oral health and facilitating opportunities to learn about and receive help with navigating public dental programs. In addition to promoting annual campaigns during Dental Health Month (April) and Seniors Month (June), some highlights from 2023 include:

- Providing oral health education at the Ignace Nursery School Mother Goose program.
- Presenting a dental-themed story time and toothbrushing demonstration at the Ignace Public Library.
- Sharing program information and offering enrollment support at the Silver Tops Senior Centre.
- Distributing oral hygiene resources at Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) youth events.
- Participating in the Ignace Nursery School Family Halloween event.
- Sharing program information and oral hygiene resources at École Immaculée-Conception's Open House.
- Hosting an Open House in celebration of NWHU's 75th Anniversary, including tours of the dental space, sharing program information and handing out oral hygiene resources.
- Providing oral hygiene resources for MBCHCH's Seniors Care Packages.
- Sharing program information and oral hygiene resources during Ignace Food Bank distribution.
- Volunteering during the annual Stuff-a-Cruiser event with OPP.
- Providing oral hygiene resources for MBCHCH's Christmas Cheer care packages.



NWHU staff Katelyn Duncan (Dental Hygienist) and Yvonne Dungey (Parenting Partner) at the Stuff-a-Cruiser event.

School and Community Dental Services

NWHU offers dental screening and preventive services to children and youth in schools and community settings. This is an opportunity to identify and address oral health concerns early, share information about dental programs, and support eligible families to enroll and access dental care.

The dental team aims to visit each location at least twice during the school year to provide dental screening and preventive services to students:

- During the first visit, all students are offered dental screening and fluoride varnish treatment. Some students inevitably are missed due to absence or declining participation.
- During the second visit, dental screening is offered to any students who were missed, and re-screening is offered to those who had dental concerns identified during the first visit. All students are offered fluoride varnish treatment again, as it is recommended that fluoride varnish be applied every 6 months to help prevent tooth decay.

In the 2023/2024 school year, NWHU will also host school clinics to provide additional preventive services including pit-and-fissure sealants and interim-stabilization therapy (IST). Providing these services in school and community settings where children already are ensures that families who cannot access the clinic still receive care.



NWHU Dental Hygienists Silvana Edenburn and Katelyn Duncan at a school clinic.

The following tables provide a summary of school and community-based dental services provided between September 2022-June 2023 and September-December 2023. The numbers reflect the total number of dental screenings and fluoride varnish treatments completed during the school year – not the number of unique students who received the services.

2022/2023 School Year

Location	Number of Dental Screenings	Number of Fluoride Varnish Treatments
Ignace Elementary School	108	61
École Immaculée-Conception	8	9
EarlyON Child & Family Centre	15	15
TOTAL	131	85

2023/2024 School Year*

Location	Number of Dental Screenings	Number of Fluoride Varnish Treatments
Ignace Elementary School	102	34
École Immaculée-Conception	9	7
EarlyON Child & Family Centre	10	6
TOTAL	121	47

**These numbers reflect services provided in the first half of the 2023/24 school year. NWHU staff will visit schools 1-2 more times before June 2024.*

NWHU Dental Clinic Services

The dental hygienist provides dental screening and preventive services to clients of all ages at the NWHU dental clinic. Dental screening is an opportunity to identify and help address oral health concerns. Preventive dental services help protect teeth from decay and include cleanings, fluoride varnish treatments, pit and fissure sealants, and interim stabilization therapy (IST).

Following their initial appointment, clients are invited to return for follow-up dental hygiene services on a schedule determined based on need (generally every 6 months). For clients that also require more extensive dental treatment services, the hygienist provides a referral for them to see the dentist during a clinical treatment day. When a client would benefit from dental treatment outside of the scope of services we could offer, the hygienist will facilitate an appropriate referral.

In 2023, 32 dental hygiene clinic days were held to provide dental screening and preventive services. A summary of dental hygiene clients and services is in the table below.

Dental Hygiene Services in NWHU Ignace Office - 2023

	Clients	Dental Screenings	Preventive Services Completed
New clients	25	27	82
Returning clients	55	63	207
TOTAL	80	90	289

NWHU also provided 10 dental clinical treatment days in Ignace, offering more extensive services from dentists and our treatment team. The dental hygienist facilitated client referrals for appointments, supported clinic promotion, and provided dental assistance to the treatment team during the clinical treatment days. During the 2023 dental clinical treatment days, 80 clients received dental services, with 404 procedures completed.

Conclusion

The dental hygiene partnership between NWHU and MBCHCH has been a successful endeavor, positively impacting the health of over 100 Ignace residents who otherwise faced barriers to access dental care. Community partnerships were strengthened as we found new opportunities to build local connections and worked together to navigate the unique needs of clients. NWHU looks forward to exploring future opportunities to work in partnership with MBCHCH.

Making a Difference, One Smile at a Time

Here are some examples of the impact that our dental hygiene partnership has made in the last year:



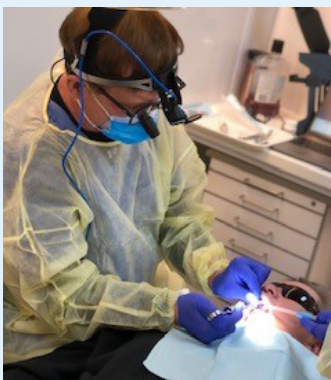
Providing a dental screening and fluoride varnish in the outreach vehicle to a family where access is a barrier.

A pregnant client came to the office for a dental screening. She explained that her dental issues were causing so much pain that she couldn't sleep. The dental hygienist helped her apply to the Green Door Project for emergency dental care and ensured that the approval process was expedited due to the situation. The client was considered high risk due to her pregnancy, and no private dental providers were willing to see her. The dental hygienist worked with MBCHCH to ensure the client was assessed and received antibiotics to treat the infection. She then worked with the NWHU dental treatment team to ensure the client's appointment was prioritized and she was seen during the next available treatment clinic in Dryden.

A client on a social program came to the office for a dental screening. She shared with staff that as a recovered addict, she'd experienced oral health problems for years. Not only was she in pain and self-conscious about the appearance of her teeth; she also stated that it impacted her mental health negatively. She explained that she felt very anxious before her initial appointment but was proud that she took the first step to improving her dental health. She is extremely grateful to be able to access dental services and receive treatment locally.



NWHU staff at the Ignace 75th anniversary Open House celebration. From left: Reanna Munn (Dental Hygienist), Dawn Sauvé (Dental Health Manager), Katelyn Duncan (Dental Hygienist), Yvonne Dungey (Parenting Partner) and Twyla Berube (Public Health Nurse).



NWHU contract dentist providing dental care to an Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program client.

A family with children in need of dental care faced challenges to make it to their appointments. They often had scheduling conflicts and did not have access to reliable transportation. The dental hygienist and NWHU parenting partner worked together with the family to ensure a safe ride was provided for the children to attend their appointments during a mutually convenient time.

Appendix 1 – NWHU Dental Services Fact Sheet

NWHU Dental Services

Need dental care, but can't afford it?
We may be able to help!

Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) offers free dental services for eligible clients on our Mobile Dental Office (MDO) or at a community clinic. To see upcoming clinics and their locations, view the clinic schedule on our website.

What can we help with?

Services available include check-ups, cleanings, x-rays, fluoride treatment, dental sealants, fillings, tooth removals and root canals.

Accessing our services

To get care from us, clients must enroll in one of these programs:

Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO)

- Full range of dental care for eligible children 0-17 years old
- Eligibility based on financial need

Ontario Works (OW)

- Emergency dental care for current adult Ontario Works recipients

Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP)

- Full range of dental care for eligible Ontarians 65 years and older
- Eligibility based on annual income (single \$22,200, couple \$37,100)

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

- Full range of dental care for current Ontario Disability Support Program recipients

Green Door Project (GDP)

- Emergency dental care for NWHU residents 18-64 years old with no dental coverage
- Eligibility based on financial need

Federal Non-insured Health Benefits (FNIHB)

- Full range of dental care for status First Nation individuals

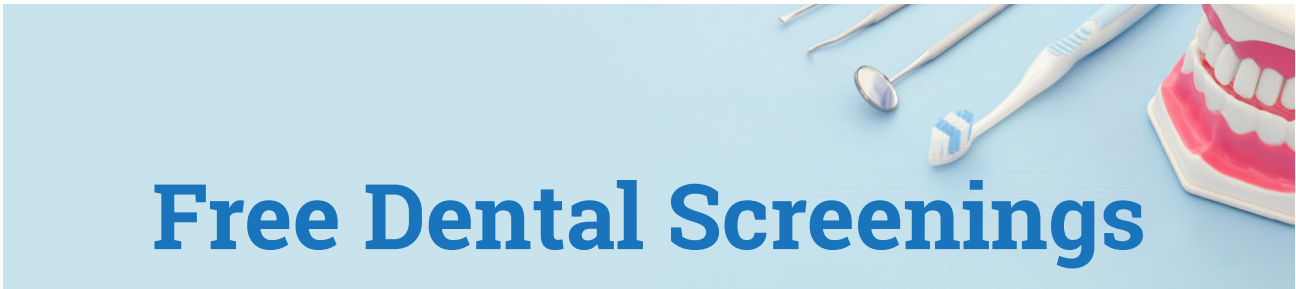
Contact us!

To access care, refer a client, or to learn more, call us at **1-855-407-6453**, or email dentalhealth@nwhu.on.ca



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Location: Ignace NWHU Office

To book an appointment,
call Katelyn at 934-2236 ext. 314754.

At your appointment, you can also get a fluoride varnish treatment, learn more about oral health, and get help applying or enrolling in NWHU's free dental programs.

