

**FACT SHEET**

# The Intersection of Oral Health and Hypertension: Blood Pressure Pilot Project Results, Year 2

September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2020

## Hypertension in North Dakota

In ND, nearly 1 in 3 (29.8%) adults...



...are diagnosed with hypertension.<sup>1</sup>

**Hypertension, or high blood pressure,** increases the risk of heart disease and stroke if left uncontrolled. Sometimes known as the “silent killer,” it often has no symptoms and requires screening to detect it.

## The Role of Dental Providers

Using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding, the North Dakota (ND) Oral Health Program (OHP) is implementing a pilot project addressing high blood pressure in dental practices. The OHP partners with dental offices to provide blood pressure training. Dental providers (dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, etc.) screen adults for high blood pressure using a standardized protocol and refer those identified with high blood pressure to medical practices. When possible, dental providers follow up on referral outcomes. Through this process, the OHP’s goal is to increase detection and treatment of high blood pressure, in turn preventing complications of this disease. The pilot project will continue until 2023.

At the end of the second year, the blood pressure pilot project achieved the following:

**Recruitment:**

**5**

New dental offices (8 total)

**Training:**

**34**

Additional dental professionals trained on proper blood pressure procedures (75 total)

**Screenings:**

**14,266**

Blood pressure screenings conducted by all partner dental providers

**Results:**

# of high blood pressure readings **1,369**

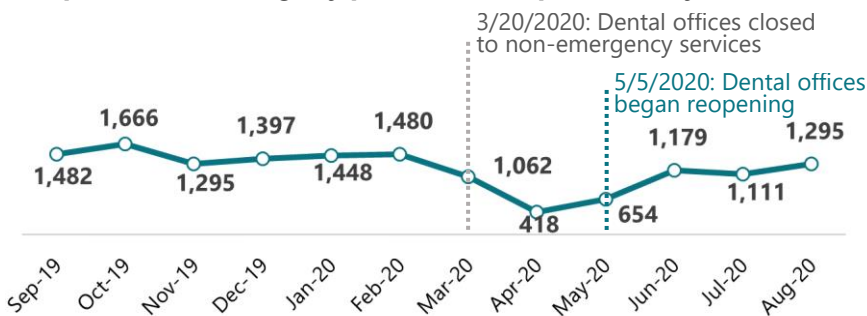
# of referrals **332**

# of referral follow-ups **151**

## The Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 significantly affected dental offices’ ability to see patients and provide blood pressure screenings. Between March and May of 2020, dental offices were closed to non-emergency visits, and the number of screenings dropped dramatically. Screenings resumed when dental offices reopened, but COVID-19 continues to strain medical facilities and may have unpredictable impacts on this project going forward.

### Blood pressure screenings by partner dental providers, by month.



## Progress and Looking Ahead

In Year 2, the OHP built upon its success by recruiting new dental offices and increasing blood pressure screenings and referrals. In fact, **they exceeded their initial 5-year goal of conducting 13,804 screenings.** As the work continues, the OHP plans to continue expansion by partnering with additional dental practices and increasing the number of screenings provided, further demonstrating the project’s effectiveness. In Year 3, the OHP will establish **new screening targets** for the remainder of the project. They will also develop a **sustainability plan** to promote the continuation of blood pressure screenings and referrals in dental practices.

By August 2023, the pilot project’s goals are to work with **24 dental offices** and **increase the proportion of blood pressure screenings conducted by 5% each year.**

## Credits

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<sup>1</sup>North Dakota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2019



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