



## **ACHIEVA/THE ARC OF GREATER PITTSBURGH**

# *Oral Health Initiative*

**This report is part of The State of Pennsylvania: The Arc's Oral Health Initiatives**

**written by ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh and The Arc of Luzerne County, Wilkes-Barre, PA**



# HealthMeet

[HealthMeet](#)<sup>®</sup>, a project of The Arc funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2012, leverages its national network of close to 700 chapters, national disability organizations, health professionals, university systems, and other key stakeholders to help reduce health disparities and increase the longevity and quality of life for people with intellectual disability (ID). Twenty-three chapters in the states of California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania participated in HealthMeet between 2012-2016.

HealthMeet was designed to provide free community-based health assessments completed by trained nursing and medical students and licensed health professionals. Individuals with ID received a general health and body composition screening that focused on vision, hearing, oral health, foot care, respiratory health, mental health, and lifestyle factors such as diet, nutrition and physical activity, substance use, and access to health care. Those assessed were encouraged to ask questions and discuss the results with their assessor. After the assessment individuals received recommendations for follow-up services to address concerns detected during the assessment. Through HealthMeet, 2,553 individuals with ID received free health assessments and referrals for follow up services.

HealthMeet provided training and education for individuals with ID, their families, health professionals and providers, direct service professionals, and university students to increase their understanding of the health issues impacting individuals with ID. These included webinars, videos, online courses, training curriculum, checklists, reports, fact sheets, blog posts, and newsletters. Three key resources were developed through these partnerships:

- ▶ The University of Illinois at Chicago's [HealthMatters](#)<sup>™</sup> program: 236 individuals from 99 organizations were trained and certified to implement this 12-week evidence-based health and fitness program designed for individuals with ID in their community.
- ▶ The University of Minnesota's [Self-Advocacy Online Modules](#): Four health-related online modules were designed for individuals with ID to learn about and take charge of their own health.
- ▶ The Association of University Centers on Disabilities [online trainings](#): Two online modules developed for LEND trainees and health professionals to learn more about health promotion and effective ways to communicate with individuals with ID.

This Oral Health Initiative Report provides a step-by-step description of an initiative developed by ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh. The materials were developed for your use in replicating the initiative in your own community. Learn more about ACHIEVA at [achieva.info](http://achieva.info).

To learn more about the HealthMeet project log onto our [website](#) or watch our [HealthMeet Video](#).

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# ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh *Oral Health Initiative*

This report is part of The Arc's Pennsylvania Oral Health Toolkit, written by ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh and The Arc of Luzerne County, Wilkes-Barre, PA

As part of the HealthMeet® program, ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, in partnership with The Arc of the United States, collaborated on a project to increase access to dental care for people with intellectual disabilities in Pennsylvania. This report includes:

- I. An introduction to ACHIEVA's leadership in oral health;
- II. Activities completed prior to the HealthMeet program;
- III. Activities completed as part of the HealthMeet program and their results; and
- IV. Recommendations for chapters interested in replicating ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh's oral health program activities

## *I. Introduction*

ACHIEVA/The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, in partnership with The Arc of the United States, observed first-hand that access to oral health care was an issue for many of those receiving HealthMeet health assessments. Access to oral health is a barrier for two main reasons – a shortage of providers and a lack of education for dental professionals serving people with intellectual disabilities.<sup>1</sup> According to the PA Department of Human Services, 55 geographic areas in Pennsylvania continue to experience a shortage of healthcare professionals. In addition, many dental providers do not accept Medicaid insurance plans which are a main source of health insurance for people with intellectual disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

ACHIEVA, as a collaborator on the [Dental Services for Person with Disabilities in Pennsylvania](#) report compiled by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly (released in February 2015), learned that 27% of dental providers do not provide services to those with disabilities because of a lack of specialized training. However, the report also found that 70% of dentists are willing to treat patients with special needs. Using these two pieces of information ACHIEVA conducted an online search for a research-based online course that could offer basic training for practicing dental professionals.

This scan identified one such course: [Practical Oral Care for People with Developmental Disabilities](#) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). ACHIEVA, along with The Arc of the United States, created a [postcard mailer](#) that would encourage practicing dentists to complete this online course, for which they would earn 2 continuing education units (CEUs) towards their dental license renewal.

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1. Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. 2014. "[Dental Services for Persons with Disabilities in Pennsylvania](#)," A Joint Committee of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.
  2. Ed Franchi and Cheryl Bumgardner. 2013. "[Importance of Access to and Utilization of Oral Health Care in Pennsylvania](#)." Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers.

## II. ACHIEVA's Oral Health Activities

ACHIEVA's Disability Healthcare Initiative (DHI) was created in 2005, and over the years has successfully secured grant funding to address dental disparities experienced by people with intellectual disabilities in Pennsylvania. In 2007, the DHI wrote [\*Access to Oral Health Care for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities: A Rising Public Health Issue\*](#). The report detailed the unmet needs of people with disabilities, national trends, dental provider preparedness, and oral health care financing.

In 2009, DHI authored [\*Access to Dental Care for People with Disabilities: Challenges and Solutions - A Report to Pennsylvania's Legislators\*](#). One outcome of this report was passage of Senate Resolution 61 by the 2013-2014 Pennsylvania Legislature. [\*SR 61\*](#) authorized the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study and issue a report on oral health care for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. The report, [\*Dental Services for People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania\*](#), issued several recommendations based on research and the survey results of 684 practicing dentists.

## III. ACHIEVA's HealthMeet Oral Health Activities

ACHIEVA made a commitment to build on its work in oral health as part of the HealthMeet program based on its history and leadership in this area. In addition to completing 366 HealthMeet health assessments that included an oral health screen and referral for services, ACHIEVA focused on reaching out to Pennsylvania's dental professionals with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and level of comfort serving people with intellectual disabilities.

Once The Arc of the United States secured permission from NIH to promote their online course, ACHIEVA's first step was to connect with Pennsylvania's Chief Dental Officer to find out how to obtain a mailing list of all practicing dentists in the state. ACHIEVA was directed to an online licensing website (which is no longer active) where they placed an order for a mailing list containing 8,095 dental professionals that held Pennsylvania licenses. ACHIEVA purchased the list, which was received via email in an Excel spreadsheet and created mailing labels using the document.

ACHIEVA wrote the text for the postcard and contracted with a graphic designer to create the look of the 8.5 by 5.5 mailer. Costs for the graphic designer can be found in Table 2. [The Appendix](#) contains a preview of this postcard. The final version of ACHIEVA's postcard can be downloaded from [The Arc's website](#).

In the text ACHIEVA used statistics from the Pennsylvania Legislature Budget and Finance Committee Report as attention grabbers and included a relevant photograph, which ACHIEVA had from a previous project, to give the postcard a professional look. Postcard design included a blank mailing panel for the mailing address and the postcard was pre-printed with ACHIEVA's non-profit standard mailing rate insignia so that it could be processed and mailed as a bulk mail piece to reduce postage costs.

ACHIEVA utilized a past project focusing on dental care for individuals with disabilities as an incentive for dentists to self-report completing the NIH course. ACHIEVA's archived webinar entitled "[\*Home Care for Individuals with Disabilities\*](#)", which was produced with the help of a dentist at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC and the Special Needs Dental Center at the University of Pittsburgh Dental School, was recorded onto a DVD and duplicated. Dental professionals who self-report completing the online professional development course will receive copies of the DVDs on a first-come first served basis. This is a tool that the dental

professional could give to their patients to help them improve daily oral care between visits. There will be additional mailing costs to send these DVDs after project completion.

Once the 8,500 postcards were printed, ACHIEVA hired a mailing service — staffed by people with disabilities — to clean the mailing list, correcting capitalization, and arranging address blocks to create a usable list. The mailing service also managed the process of printing the addresses directly on the postcard, sorting the mailing, and delivering it to the post office.

The labeled and sorted postcards were taken to the post office on February 17, 2016, and mailed at a non-profit bulk mail postage rate. All expenses to mail the postcards can be found in Table 2.

## Results

It was very important to ascertain the impact, if any, on the postcard mailing and course enrollment. Neither ACHIEVA nor The Arc had the means to follow-up with the postcard recipients (no emails or phone numbers were provided in the mailing list) to ask if they had enrolled in the course. Therefore, it was agreed that The Arc would work with NIH to obtain the aggregate number of Pennsylvania dental professionals who completed the course:

- ▶ Three months prior to the mailing (November 17, 2015 – February 17, 2016) and
- ▶ Three month following the mailing (February 18, 2016 – May 18, 2016)

These figures would be compared to the number of professionals completing the course the prior year during the November 17, 2014 – February 17, 2015 and February 18, 2015 - May 18, 2015 time periods.

In June 2016 The Arc contacted NIH and obtained these results:

**TABLE 1: COURSE ENROLLMENT NUMBERS**

TIME FRAME	NUMBER OF PENNSYLVANIA DENTAL PROFESSIONALS COMPLETING COURSE
November 17, 2014 – February 17, 2015	0
February 18, 2015- May 15, 2015	0
November 17, 2015 – February 17, 2016 (three months prior to postcard mailing)	1
February 18, 2016 – May 18, 2016 (three months after postcard mailing)	25

While we cannot claim that any increased enrollment was a direct result of the postcard mailing, we can report the relationship between ACHIEVA's postcard publicity efforts and course enrollment numbers.

Another measurement will be the number of requests for the DVDs. Seven dental professionals contacted ACHIEVA requesting a total of 54 DVD's. The mailer itself was to create awareness of the barriers to access to care people with disabilities encounter and encourage dental professionals to learn more through the NIH online course. ACHIEVA wanted to make dental professionals aware that people with disabilities do not require specialized training or equipment in order to receive proper care. They can most likely be

treated in their local community dental office. This new knowledge will hopefully urge more dentists to treat more patients with intellectual disabilities.

The total cost for obtaining the mailing list, producing the postcard mailers, prepping them to be mailed and mailing them was \$3,239.00. This does not include ACHIEVA's other expenses to complete the project including staff time, indirect costs or operations expenses. It also does not include ACHIEVA's in-kind support of the professional production, duplication and future mailing of the DVDs. A list of all acquired expenses can be found in the table below.

**TABLE 2: BUDGET EXPENSES**

EXPENDITURES	COST
Mailing list	\$115
Graphic Designer	\$250
Printing costs – postcard	\$1,000
Printing costs – address labels	\$350
Mail services – sorting and delivery to post office	\$200
Non-profit bulk mail postage rate	\$1,324
<b>Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$3,239</b>

## IV. Recommendations for Replications

If another chapter of The Arc replicates this project, we would make two main recommendations:

1. If available, it would be ideal to purchase email addresses for the dental professionals. Following-up with dental professionals regarding the effectiveness of the training with only mailing addresses created some difficulty. This would also be a more cost effective way to reach out to practicing dentists to educate them about the access to care issue, how to enroll in the course, and then to also conduct a follow-up satisfaction survey. It allows you to send multiple reminders regarding the course instead of just a single touch. However, obtaining the list might be a challenge. While some states permit the sharing of names and addresses of professionals, others may not. There are some state medical societies that sell mailing lists, but these are membership organizations so not all providers belong to these entities. In addition, not all professional organizations will sell their membership lists, nor do professionals want to share their email addresses.
2. We would encourage the use of some type of incentive to entice those to complete the course. There is room for creativity here in what this might be. ACHIEVA had the benefit of having extra DVDs from a previous project. We also recommend using mailers that are professional, colorful and eye-catching with relevant photography to draw the reader in.

The press-ready files for the postcard can be downloaded from [The Arc's website](#).

# ACHIEVA Oral Health Postcard: Preview

ACHIEVA, along with The Arc of the United States, created a postcard mailer that would encourage practicing dentists to complete the online course mentioned in this report. Below is a small-scale preview of the postcard design (the full-size postcard is 8.5 inches by 5.5 inches).

The press-ready file of the postcard can be downloaded from [The Arc's website](#) and taken to a local print shop to be produced. You can either work with your local print shop to print the recipients' addresses directly on the postcard or you can make address labels to attach after the cards are printed.

## FRONT OF POSTCARD



**35 PERCENT** of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) **HAVE ORAL HEALTH ISSUES.**

The rate of missing teeth is 2.5 times the rate of the general population.<sup>1</sup>

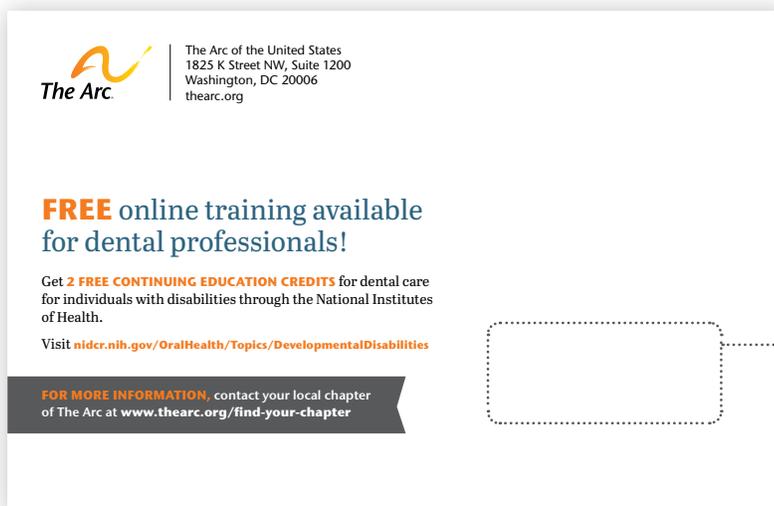
Poor oral health has an impact on learning, communication, self-esteem, and nutrition which affects activities in school, work, and home.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of individuals with ID can be treated in a normal dental office setting with very few modifications to routine protocols.<sup>3</sup>

**The Arc**  
For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

1. Statistics from The Arc's HealthMeet project  
2. The Patient with Special Needs: General Treatment Considerations: <http://www.dentalcare.com/media/en-US/education/ce384/ce384.pdf>  
3. Tesini DA, Fenton SJ. Oral health needs of persons with physical or mental disabilities. Dent Clin North Am. 1994 Jul; 38(3):483-98.

## BACK OF POSTCARD



**The Arc** | The Arc of the United States  
1825 K Street NW, Suite 1200  
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thearc.org

**FREE** online training available for dental professionals!

Get **2 FREE CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS** for dental care for individuals with disabilities through the National Institutes of Health.

Visit [nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/DevelopmentalDisabilities](http://nidcr.nih.gov/OralHealth/Topics/DevelopmentalDisabilities)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, contact your local chapter of The Arc at [www.thearc.org/find-your-chapter](http://www.thearc.org/find-your-chapter)

You can print the recipients' addresses here.