



Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County

Contact:

Clara Colmenero, PIO

c.colmenero@jbazmc.maricopa.gov

(602) 372-0874

Newsrooms: Video of this program can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mCzPcqAnak>

Additional B-roll footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEIRWxlacKU>

Dental Program for Justice-Involved Youth Receives Award

The Smiles of Hope program has provided dental services to hundreds of youth

PHOENIX (May 9, 2022) – Poor dental hygiene and dental decay are two common healthcare issues experienced by youth involved in the justice system. Many of them report not having any prior dental care. To alleviate this problem, the Juvenile Probation Department, part of the Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County, sought an innovative partnership with A.T. Still University’s Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ATSU-ASDOH) to provide much-needed dental services to youth through the program now known as Smiles of Hope.

While the average length of stay for each youth in detention is approximately 30 days, it is within six days youth undergo a preventive healthcare visit where dental needs are determined. If needed, a dental visit will be completed onsite with permission from the guardian.

“Many of our youth have either never received preventative dental care or have not received care in many years,” said Dr. Chantay Banikarim, detention medical services director. “Dental caries (or tooth decay) is a leading healthcare issue in this population, and we are grateful for the opportunity to provide this service to our youth in custody.”

According to Juvenile Probation Chief Eric Meaux, “Holding youth accountable, preventing reoffending, and treating youth fairly are necessary for public safety. A key element to promoting these outcomes is the development of genuine trust and rapport with our youth. This partnership supports this outcome and the understanding that probation includes a wide array of support. When youth see and hear caring adults working toward their overall wellness, we advance trust and rapport.”

Dental students, along with a dental hygienist from ATSU-ASDOH, visit Juvenile Detention every Friday, bringing the necessary equipment to provide onsite dental services including fluoride varnish cleanings, assessments and taking X-rays in the detention medical clinic. Youth who require non-urgent clinical

care are referred to ATSU-ASDOH to receive further services upon leaving detention. For youth who are unable to go to the dental school, dental students work with the youths' guardians to identify dental clinics within their community so they may seek treatment after detention.

"The partnership between Maricopa County Juvenile Probation and ATSU-ASDOH has been a phenomenal experience. After spending time at the detention center, dental students have expressed an interest in working within detention facilities after they graduate, and the youth are teachers for our students. They open the dental students' eyes to the challenges they face and the barriers they must overcome. These experiences make our students better providers," said Scott Howell, DMD, MPH, ATSU-ASDOH's director of public health dentistry & teledentistry.

The onsite dental team also communicates with the dentist via teledentistry to ensure urgent dental concerns receive immediate attention before the youth leaves detention. While onsite, the dental team offers dental education to youth on the negative effects of drug use on teeth and oral hygiene and leading causes of dental disease and permanent tooth loss. At the end of their dental visit, staff prepares a summary that is placed in the youth's personal property for release to the youth's guardians in hopes it will be a useful reference for future continuity of care.

To recognize the tremendous efforts of the Juvenile Probation Department in partnership with ATSU-ASDOH, the Smiles of Hope program was selected as a 2021 Arizona Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda Award winner in the category of Protecting Children, Families, and Communities.

The Smiles of Hope program began in 2017 and has continued serving detained youth throughout the years. During the last year, despite the pandemic, ATSU-ASDOH's dental team provided care to more than 140 detained youth.

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The Judicial Branch of Arizona in Maricopa County is comprised of Superior Court, Adult Probation and Juvenile Probation, which includes juvenile detention. The Judicial Branch in Maricopa County is the fourth largest trial court system in the nation and, along with its 3,200 employees, is dedicated to providing a safe, fair and impartial forum for resolving disputes, enhancing access to services, and providing innovative, evidence-based practices that improve the safety of the community and ensure the public's trust and confidence in the Judicial Branch. For more information, visit www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov.