

## **OUTREACH**

Outreach activities are vital to the success and implementation of programs with Special Health Services (SHS). Providing information to the public regarding programs and services is an important part of service coordination. Much needed information will help communities respond to the special needs of children and assist their families access needed resources. A very large service network is comprised of hospitals, clinics, public health organizations, schools, government agencies and community groups, all of which serve special needs populations in various ways. The opportunities are almost endless for engaging in outreach activities and making connections in Missouri communities.

### **What is outreach?**

An organized effort to expand awareness of and participation in SHS programs throughout Missouri. In essence, outreach is the mission of SHS: "To develop, promote and support community-based systems that enable the best possible health and greatest degree of independence for Missourians with special health care needs."

### **How does it strengthen the Program?**

- Provides community/organizations with awareness of services that the Program offers.
- Provides an opportunity to learn how other agencies' services can benefit Program participants.
- Provides opportunities to work with stakeholders in an effort to promote positive outcomes, as well as advocate for participants and their families.
- Provides opportunities for feedback to improve Program and/or services.
- Builds collaboration with providers to assure participant's needs are met.

### **What are strategies for maintaining outreach?**

Outreach is always a collaborative effort. Partnering agencies and organizations are often very interested in networking opportunities that will promote understanding and provide needed services to children and youth with special health care needs and their families. Opportunities and strategies for conducting and maintaining outreach may be found in the following areas: medical, education, and agency/community.

#### **Medical**

- Provide information to children's hospitals, doctors, nurses, therapists, and social workers.
- Attend therapy clinics and cleft lip and palate team meetings and become knowledgeable of children's hospital services.

## **Education**

- Provide brochures to the school districts regarding programs, attend IEP meetings, and talk with school representatives (teachers, social workers, nurses, administrators) about services.

## **Agency/Community**

- Become involved with maternal, child and family health community coalitions.
- Promote and attend Family Partnership activities.
- Present at local meetings.
- Make it a part of your routine by researching and visiting various organizations that may benefit participants.
- Include day-to-day conversations, such as phone referrals, explaining how to make referrals and share community resources.

## **Suggestions on how to conduct outreach**

- Network with various organizations that have a similar mission and often provide services to the same population (health alliances, family coalitions, immigrant/refugee coalitions).
- Recognize the differences in providing outreach in urban vs. rural areas.
- Utilize outreach tools for identifying outreach sources and tracking activities.