

Ronald McDonald Care Mobile 2022 Summary & Progress Report

The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile (RMCM) is a state-of-the-art mobile dental clinic that has been delivering pediatric dental services directly to underserved children in their own neighborhoods in western North Dakota since 2012. The Care Mobile brings the dental care directly to the school-based or school-linked community setting, breaking down barriers to care.

The Care Mobile's target populations are low-income and underserved children living in the western half of ND. To be eligible for care, children must be age 0-21, not have a regular dentist and not have seen a dentist for treatment in the past two years. Medicaid and insurance are billed, but no child is denied care due to inability to pay. We strive to reach children who have no other means to access oral health care. The majority of the children seen are uninsured or on Medicaid and unable to find a dental provider in their area that accepts Medicaid. The Care Mobile complements and does not replace services in the community.

To reach the children in greatest need, we prioritize service sites including schools with greater than 40 percent of their children on the free/reduced fee school lunch programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, American Indian reservation areas, and community health centers without dental clinics.

Services include diagnostic, preventive, restorative and referrals as needed. The program provides dental exams, x-rays, caries risk assessments, oral health education, cleanings, fluoride treatments, dental sealants, fillings, pulpotomies, simple extractions, and referrals for more complex care. The RMCM is staffed by a dentist, dental hygienist and dental assistant licensed to practice in ND.

In 2022, still in the midst of the Pandemic, the Care Mobile was able to return to fairly normal operations with continued COVID preventive measures. We were able to deliver services at 46 sites, treated 962 children and provided 1,679 appointments and 7,145 dental services for a total value of \$532,860. And we were able to achieve these results with our generator out and service suspended for 5 weeks. Since the Care Mobile began operations 12 years ago, nearly 14,000 children have been served and more than 24,000 appointments provided for a total value of \$5,861,229. We are completely booked for 2023 and the demand for services continues to far outweigh our capabilities. Our goal of treating over 1,000 children in 2023 seems attainable.

Our Demographic figures show that of the children treated in 2021, 44% were Native American, 36% were Caucasian, 9% were African American, 7% were Hispanic and <4% were other races. This data indicates that we are reaching our target population, treating a high percentage of Native American children as they experience tooth decay at twice the rate of non-native children. In 2021, 76% of the children we served were uninsured, 33% were on Medicaid and 1% had private insurance. However, no child is denied care due to inability to pay. More than two-thirds of the children are in pre-school and elementary school.

A comparison of Care Mobile yearly data shows that the number of appointments and the cost of care per child continues to decrease slightly over the years indicating that providing some continuity of care for the children can reduce their dental needs and costs. The Care Mobile is definitely making a difference. By bringing the oral health care directly to the child, the program eliminates many of the barriers underserved families face in accessing healthcare services. And, while it was not our intention at the outset, the Care Mobile has become the dental home for the majority of children that we treat each year. We are their only option.