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## **Dining with the Dentists: Building Bridges in the Medical Neighborhood**

**Overview:** In a time where integrated and holistic care is rapidly expanding, it is only appropriate that dental care be more closely aligned with physical care in order to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities. Many young children under the age of 4 in Maine lack adequate dental care and therefore rely on alternative means of preventative oral health care that is administered by their pediatricians. Pediatricians and Family Medicine Physicians act as an entry point into the dental healthcare system, which in turn increases the need for interprofessional communication to provide comprehensive care to these patients. In addition, as the concept of “medical neighborhood” gains momentum, it will be increasingly important to build relationships among medical and dental providers (amongst many others) in a community or region to assure optimal use of scarce resources and improved individual and community health.

**Objective:** The main objective is to bring dental and medical professionals within a community or a region together to better coordinate the physical and oral health care of very young children (6 mos. – age 4).

**Outcome:** Dining with the Dentists aims to: 1) introduce medical and dental providers who work in a given community or region to each other in an informal setting over dinner; 2) build awareness of each providers’ practice scope and patient population; 3) build professional relationships that facilitate communication and referral networks for emergency or routine care. Participants will be surveyed post-meeting to determine the impact of the meetings on attitude and practice.