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Renewed emphasis on dental readiness

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Fort Leavenworth has initiated an ongoing marketing campaign to implement dental readiness awareness for soldiers and their units. The campaign slogan, “Don’t let dental readiness take you out of the fight,” speaks to the requirement for all soldiers to maintain worldwide deployment capability.

Fort Leavenworth Dental Clinic Commander Dr. (Maj.) Shani Thompson is responsible for all three dental clinics on post. Her practice is based at Smith Dental Clinic with Dr. (Capt.) Brandon Wolf, where they provide comprehensive dental treatment and readiness care for all of the assigned soldiers at Fort Leavenworth. The Joint Regional Correctional Facility Dental Clinic is under the supervision of Dr. (Capt.) Crystal Smith, and the supervisor at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks Dental Clinic is Dr. (Capt.) Phillip Buckley.

The Army requirement for dental readiness is 95 percent.

“Readiness is always a top priority, and as the dental clinic commander, I have to make sure that we are meeting the intent of our leaders,” Thompson said. “We are making consistent and tangible strides to improve at Fort Leavenworth. Of course, our goal is 100 percent dental readiness. But, to positively illustrate our current progress, we have moved from 93.4 percent readiness among all soldiers on post to 96.2 percent in just three months.”

Dental readiness relates to a service member’s worldwide deployment status because soldiers who require urgent or emergency dental treatment are not deployable. Army dentists constantly answer the question: “Is this service member dentally ready to deploy for worldwide duty?”

Thompson said dentists identify a soldier’s readiness status using established parameters that are designated within categories predetermined by the Army.

“Class 1 identifies active-duty service members with current dental examinations who do not require dental treatment or reevaluation. Class 2 identifies active-duty service members with current dental examinations whose oral conditions are unlikely to result in dental emergencies within 12 months,” Thompson said. “And, Class 3 identifies active-duty service members who require urgent or emergency dental treatment. Soldiers whose examination results identify their being designated either Class 1 or Class 2 are qualified for worldwide deployment.”

Service members are required by the Department of Defense to be qualified for worldwide deployment. Any soldier designated Class 3 is not qualified for deployment until all identified dental treatment needs are met.

Thompson said soldiers designated Class 4 simply require an annual dental assessment examination because 12 months or more have passed since their last evaluation. This assessment examination also identifies any treatment needs based upon the category definitions described within the Army’s first three classes. Coordination with units is also a key element.

“It is important to keep dental readiness current,” said April Jiles, medical support assistant at Smith Dental Clinic. “I send e-mail status updates to unit liaisons each week, send out e-mail reminders and work directly with soldiers to ensure that we keep them on track. Our goal is to help soldiers succeed in this area too. Failure to attain and maintain deployment capability can adversely affect a service member’s career.”

The Fort Leavenworth Dental Readiness Campaign contains three ongoing phases of planning development and implementation. Phase one is based upon direct communication with individual soldiers and unit dental readiness coordinators. Phase two involves developing and implementing public affairs plans, identifying and engaging advertising platforms that reach the widest applicable audiences on post and using other marketing such as social media. Phase three implements assessment and treatment of soldiers through appointments.

“We are finding that dissemination of information is another key element toward improving the overall soldier dental readiness at Fort Leavenworth,” Wolf said. “Dr. Thompson has tasked me with developing our ongoing marketing efforts. This primarily involves coming up with the marketing slogan tag line and developing any collateral items we use to promote awareness of the initiative to both soldiers and units.”

Smith Dental Clinic is open 7:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:15-4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Dental exams are by appointment only; there are no walk-in appointments. Units and soldiers can make appointments at Smith Dental Clinic by calling 684-5516 or 684-5001. Dental sick call is 7:30-9 a.m. Monday through Friday.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Dentist Capt. Brandon Wolf and Dental Assistant Spc. Heather Johnston perform an annual dental exam on Pvt. Hunter Fierro, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Military Police Battalion (Detention), Nov. 8 at Smith Dental Clinic. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

