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Idaho Receives \$100,000 to Improve Access for Preventive Dental Care

Idaho has been awarded \$100,000 from the DentaQuest Foundation to join the Oral Health 2014 Initiative to develop ways for Idahoans to access preventive dental care. The award provides resources for the state to work with community partners to identify and develop ways for Idahoans with oral health disparities to access dental care. Oral health disparities can range from being low-income, living in rural areas, race/ethnicity or even a lack of emphasis and education on the importance of oral health to overall well-being.

The Idaho Oral Health Program, under the Department of Health and Welfare-Division of Public Health, and the Idaho Oral Health Alliance are partners in the grant, joining 20 other states in a nationwide effort to reverse oral health disparities in the United States. According to the 2009 Idaho Smile Survey, students from families with lower incomes have higher rates of tooth decay. Also, Hispanic students have nearly three times the amount of severe active tooth decay than white students.

This is a really important moment for oral health,” said Ralph Fucillo, President of the DentaQuest Foundation. “State organizations have a critical role in health improvements as advocates and stakeholders. The Idaho Oral Health Program, Idaho Oral Health Alliance, and the other Oral Health 2014 Initiative organizations enhance the national movement of collaborative leaders who are embracing the challenge and the opportunity to address oral health disparities in their communities.”

There are two main goals for the first year of the project. The first is to identify and develop ways medical and dental professionals can work together to improve total patient care. One example would be a medical referral of a pregnant woman to a dental professional for an oral health exam. Several research studies have shown poor oral health may have adverse pregnancy outcomes. Mothers need to be aware that harmful bacteria from tooth decay or gum disease can be transmitted from either them or even other caregivers to the child after birth.

The second goal is to identify untapped opportunities for a medical provider or registered dental hygienist to provide preventive oral health care services, such as applying fluoride varnish to teeth or performing oral health screenings to adults and children in settings outside the dental office. The project will bring community partners together in a collaborative planning process to identify and develop innovative ways for Idahoans to access preventive dental care.

“We are thrilled to partner with the DentaQuest Foundation on this project and improve access to oral health care in Idaho,” says Idaho Oral Health Program Manager, Mimi-Hartman-Cunningham. “This is a great opportunity for Idaho’s medical, dental, and public health communities to work together, address oral health disparities, and come up with innovative ways to expand access to dental care for Idahoans.”

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

About the DentaQuest Foundation

The DentaQuest Foundation is committed to optimal oral health for all Americans through its support of prevention and access to affordable care, and through its partnerships with funders, policymakers and community leaders. For more information, please visit dentaquestfoundation.org.

About the Idaho Oral Health Program

The Idaho Oral Health Program, under the Department of Health and Welfare-Division of Public Health, is funded by the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Title V. It has functioned since 1951 working to improve access to preventive care for children and women across Idaho. The program contracts with Idaho's seven local district health departments to provide oral health preventive services to high-risk children in community settings. Program priorities include school-based fluoride mouth-rinse programs, fluoride varnish clinics in schools, Head Start and Women Infants and Children (WIC) clinics, sealant clinics and oral health education for children, adults and health professionals.

About the Idaho Oral Health Alliance

The Idaho Oral Health Alliance is a non-profit organization of dental professionals, public health agencies, businesses, community health providers and individuals, dedicated to better oral and overall health for all Idahoans. It is open to all who have an interest in promoting good oral health and increasing access to preventive and restorative dental care.

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