



NEW YORK STATE DENTAL FOUNDATION

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My name is Stacy McIliduff, and I am the Executive Director of the New York State Dental Foundation; a sister organization of the New York State Dental Association (NYSDA). We are committed to improving the oral health of all New Yorkers and supporting outreach to communities in need. Incorporated in 1980, the Foundation was established to foster a statewide approach to the advancement of the art and science of dentistry and dental education. Our work proudly expresses the profession's commitment to social responsibility and to being the leading oral health champion of the vulnerable and undeserved.

I am writing to applaud Governor Hochul's attempts to address the critical healthcare challenges in New York State, particularly in the realm of oral health, in her proposed FY 2025 budget. It is heartening to see a focus on enhancing access to care; however, **we believe that a more proactive approach can be incorporated to ensure the well-being of our communities.**

Through *My Healthy Smile NY*, the New York State Dental Foundation seeks to address oral health challenges facing New Yorkers by deploying **Community Dental Health Coordinators** in strategic regions to facilitate care coordination, conduct community outreach, promote dental workforce development, and gather essential data related to oral health in New York State.

A CDHC acts as a bridge between the community and clinical care with a working knowledge of dental disease processes, the dental delivery system and disease prevention strategies.

The CDHC is a Registered Dental Assistant or Registered Dental Hygienist with additional training in care coordination and motivational interviewing. In addition to engaging in community-based outreach to promote oral health and disease prevention, they can interact directly with populations who are at risk for dental disease and are unsure of how to access dental care or community services.

Armed with the latest telehealth technology and a unique smartphone application, our CDHCs will become an essential part of the patient navigation and community education system, poised to gather crucial data that can help inform policy and decisions that impact the health of all New Yorkers.

Just as community health workers have proven to be indispensable in bridging gaps and improving health outcomes within diverse communities, the establishment of community dental health coordinators presents a parallel opportunity for transformative change in oral healthcare.

CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE ORAL HEALTH OF NEW YORKERS TODAY

- 1) **LIMITED ACCESS TO CARE:** Even with the robust Medicaid benefits available in New York, there are vulnerable populations falling through the cracks and major issues with emergency department overcrowding. Veterans without a service-connected dental condition may not have access to routine dental care. For foster care children, individuals with developmental disabilities, and the elderly, there are often challenges in accessing care due to a shortage of Medicaid providers and logistical barriers.

HOW MY HEALTHY SMILE NY WILL EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE:

- CDHCs will utilize Mouthwatch Teledent telehealth technology to conduct oral health screenings for patients age 0-3 in Early Head Start centers across the state.
 - CDHCs will host special access to care events to increase the number of foster care children receiving preventative oral health care upon entry into the foster care setting.
 - CDHCs will work with a team of volunteer dentists to care for Veterans without a 100% service-related disability, who are otherwise ineligible for basic dental care at VA Hospitals.
 - CDHCs will partner with the Special Olympics New York to staff Special Smiles screenings at Healthy Athlete events with a focus on connecting IDD patients to dental homes.
 - CDHCs will coordinate care events and screenings to help treat particularly vulnerable populations in each region, including migrant populations and senior citizens.
- 2) **WORKFORCE CRISIS:** The workforce crisis has been particularly acute in rural areas, where there are already shortages of dental professionals. Dental professionals across the state are nearing retirement age, and there are not enough new graduates to fill the gaps. This is leading to increased competition for dental professionals and difficulty attracting and retaining staff.

HOW MY HEALTHY SMILE NY WILL PROMOTE THE DENTAL PROFESSIONS:

- CDHCs will demonstrate the efficacy of dental care coordination as an effective workforce model for expanding access to care for vulnerable populations.
 - CDHCs will develop a pipeline of dental support professionals to meet the oral health needs of New Yorkers by administering scholarships at dental hygiene schools.
 - CDHCs will visit high schools and career fairs to promote the dental professions and diversify the future dental professional talent pool.
- 3) **ORAL HEALTH LITERACY:** There is often a lack of understanding by patients about how to access providers who accept Medicaid Managed Care plans, what is covered by insurance, out-of-pocket costs for treatment, and the importance of preventative care and immunizations.

HOW MY HEALTHY SMILE NY WILL INCREASE ORAL HEALTH LITERACY

- CDHCs will increase oral health literacy to provide early intervention and prevention for the 0-3 population by delivering programming to expectant mothers.
- CDHCs will reduce emergency department utilization by using the *My Healthy Smile NY* smartphone app to triage Medicaid-eligible individuals with emergent dental care needs.
- CDHCs will increase awareness about the HPV vaccination and prevention of oropharyngeal cancer by hosting public screenings at sporting events.

The overall budget for the *My Healthy Smile NY* pilot program is \$3.3M.

The New York State Dental Foundation is committed to raising **\$430,000 in private funding** to underwrite costs related to Community Dental Health Coordinator training and equipment needs, app development, and costs associated with hosting oral health care screenings and events in the community. **As such, the New York State Dental Foundation is requesting consideration and inclusion of \$2.8M within the FY 2025 Final Budget.**

Implementation of this pilot program will be transformational for vulnerable populations in New York that need help navigating the complexities of oral health care.

We believe in the potential of *My Healthy Smile NY* to make a substantial impact on the oral health landscape of New York State. By allocating resources and advocating for the program, we can collectively contribute to a healthier and more equitable future for all New Yorkers.