

**Iowa Department of Public Health
Community Oral Health Program
Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Appropriations Request**

Project Title and Amount Request

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is requesting \$1 million to improve access to oral health care in Iowa for low-income and vulnerable adults, including older Iowans and pregnant women, and low-income children, with emphasis on ages 0-5 and children with special health care needs. A priority population will be the target population living in rural Iowa, including Dental Health Professional Shortage Area counties.

Both public and private partners such as the Bureau of Health Care Access, Department of Human Services, University of Iowa Dental School, Iowa-Nebraska Primary Care Association, Iowa Dental Association., Iowa Dental Hygienists Association, and the Delta Dental Plan of Iowa will contribute to the success of this proposal. IDPH will also work with these entities to develop plans for sustaining the programs beyond the funding period.

Background

As the number of dentists in rural Iowa has declined, access to oral health care has become sporadic or non-existent for many Iowans, especially the elderly, low-income and vulnerable adults and children and those with special health care needs. This access problem was documented in a 2002 report issued by *Oral Health America*, which gave Iowa a grade of B-overall for dental services. However, in the categories of access to care, visits to dentists by those with incomes below \$15,000 and dental insurance for the elderly, Iowa's marks declined from C- to F respectively.

The vast majority of tooth loss results from dental disease that is largely preventable when access to oral health care is available and proper services are provided. In Iowa there are three major factors contributing to poor oral health: access to care; cost of care; and a rapidly declining number of dental professionals willing to practice in rural Iowa. This issue is further complicated by the fact that in 89 of Iowa's 93 rural counties, nearly one quarter of the population is over the age of 65, and many of these persons have extremely limited or no access to oral health care.¹

The goal is to improve access to dental services for underserved children, low-income Iowans, older Iowans and pregnant women, particularly in rural areas of the state. If left untreated, dental health problems can lead to far more serious and costly health problems. For example, mouth infections can lead to serious complications for women who are pregnant. Low-income children have twice as much tooth decay as other children and more than 51 million school hours are lost to dental-related illnesses each year nationwide. Particularly among older adults, mouth infections can worsen other chronic conditions such as diabetes and reduce a person's overall

¹ Currently, 72 of Iowa's 99 counties are designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Area counties. Of grave concern is that a significant number of Iowa dentists will be retiring in the next 10 years. In rural Iowa it is estimated that 20 percent of all dentists are over the age of 60, and in about half of Iowa's counties, there are no dentists under age 35. U.S. DHHS. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General – Executive Summary*. Rockville, MD: U.S. DHHS.

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resistance to disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 24 percent of Iowans over 65 have lost all their natural teeth due to tooth decay and gum disease.

Proposal

The IDPH - Oral Health Bureau will create an oral health care delivery system wherein dental services will be delivered to community sites targeting underserved children and adults. This system will use community health centers to serve as the operations base for vans and equipment. Staffing will include providers from the community health centers, local volunteer dentists and dental hygienists, local public health dental hygienists, university dental students, community college dental hygiene and dental assistant students.

For older Iowans and families with young children, rather than having them leave their community or institutional setting to seek services, the delivery system will bring dental professionals and equipment directly to the communities or nursing homes.

For older Iowans living in a residential care setting, this is critical as poor mental and physical health makes it difficult to move the residents from the nursing home to a dental office for care. To reach adults and children, the community oral health program will provide dental services in group home settings, Head Start centers, WIC clinics, and other satellite sites.

Funding will provide for the purchase of dental equipment customized for transportable use. The equipment will be set-up onsite thereby creating temporary dental offices that are easily accessible by the targeted populations. This will allow for a full range of dental services to be provided at community sites including dental sealants where applicable.

IDPH, through the Oral Health Bureau, will serve as the lead agency, providing overall program guidance, technical assistance, and managing grant funds. The project will be administered in the same manner as other bureau-supported oral health programming, such as the school-based dental sealant program, where sealants are administered at school sites. Funds will be used as follows:

Item	Cost
Dental equipment to include portable setups. (Chairs, power, assistant, and x-ray and sterilization carts, start-up supplies, hand pieces, and instruments.)	\$621,460
Vans to transport the equipment, dental supplies.	\$140,000
One IDPH Oral Health Bureau FTE to serve as full-time project administrator.	\$ 60,000
Loan repayment. Since recruitment/retention of dental professionals is critical to long-term efforts to increase access to oral health care in rural Iowa, funds will be used to assist in the repayment of educational loans of students who agree to practice in rural Health Professional Shortage Area counties. These students will be initially identified through their willingness to participate in the community oral health program.	\$173,540

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This proposal allows IDPH to leverage additional funding. Based on the target populations, IDPH anticipates that Medicaid funding may be available for services. The department continues to partner with private resources such as the Wellmark Foundation, Iowa Health Foundation, and Delta Dental Plan.

Report Language

\$1,000,000 shall be provided to the Iowa Department of Public Health to develop a community-based oral health program, in partnership with private and public providers, to increase access to oral health care for low-income and vulnerable children, adults and older Iowans. Suggested account: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.*