



Boulder County-based Dental Aid Awarded Oral Health Care Delivery Grant

New program ensures children and adults who are unable to access dental care in a traditional dental office setting receives preventive oral health care services.

LAFAYETTE, Colo., December 10, 2015 — [Dental Aid](#), the area’s only nonprofit supporting the oral health care needs of low income and uninsured adults and children, was selected as one of six organizations across Colorado as a [SMILES Dental Project](#) participant. SMILES (Spanning Miles in Linking Everyone to Services) Dental Project is a 5-year, \$4.7 million initiative to pilot a new program to bring access to dental services to low-income, vulnerable and isolated Coloradans, especially children and seniors. Dental Aid is the only participant in Boulder and Broomfield counties.

Many adults and children – especially in low-income, rural communities – don’t visit dental offices and clinics on a regular basis due to the cost and location of services, or geographic, cultural and language barriers. This results in higher health care costs through emergency room visits for pain and infections, as well as high treatment costs due to lack of preventive care.

SMILES Dental Home Project will deploy geographically distributed, collaborative, telehealth-connected dental teams to perform preventive and early intervention services for patients in low-income, rural areas; and to initiate referrals, as needed, for follow-up treatment by dentists, thereby expanding access to dental services and improving overall health outcomes.

To help meet this need locally, registered Dental Aid dental hygienists will be integrated into community spaces such as recreation centers and schools to provide preventive dental care. They will use telehealth technology, a live audio/video link, to communicate with a Dental Aid dentist. Earlier this year, House Bill 15-309 was passed to facilitate the adoption of this model which allows a certified, registered dental hygienist to place interim therapeutic restorations under the supervision of a dentist, via telehealth.

“Dental Aid is thrilled to be a part of this progressive oral health care outreach effort. We have been providing dental care services to the underserved for over 40 years, often seeing patients at homeless shelters, schools and the like,” said Dennis Lewis, Dental Aid President. “We know the simple act of getting to a dentist appointment – finding transportation, getting time off work, and paying for the service – is impossible for many families. This grant enables Dental Aid to reduce many of the dental care access barriers for the underserved in Boulder and Broomfield counties.”

The six funded sites cover 30 Colorado counties and will each receive funding to participate in a year-long planning process. That will be followed by three years of additional funding to implement new systems of providing dental service across broad geographic regions, where access to care is impeded due to geographic or socio-economic barriers to care.

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The six providers selected to participate in the SMILES Dental Project include:

- **Dental Aid, Inc.** seeks to improve existing community based hygiene program in schools and community sites.
- **Summit Community Care Clinic** will implement the SMILES Dental Home by starting with school-based health centers in Leadville and from there, move towards Park County.
- **Northeast Colorado Health Department**, in partnership with **Rural Communities Resource Center**, plans to build upon school-based dental sealant programs and add in nursing home care.
- **Tri-County Health Network** seeks to build upon the SKIPPY program (San Juan Kids Cavity Prevention program) to add a treatment component.
- **High Plains Community Health Center** in partnership with **Valley-Wide Health Systems**, will develop the Lower Arkansas Valley SMILES Dental Home to provide dental services across a large geographical area, from Pueblo to Kansas.
- **Mountain Family Health Center** seeks to provide oral health services to the underserved in the West Mountain region by placing hygienists in medical sites and eventually move to community sites.

SMILES Dental Project is funded jointly by the [Caring for Colorado Foundation](#) and the [Colorado Health Foundation](#). “We have a long-standing commitment to improving oral health for underserved populations in Colorado. The SMILES Dental Project gives us the opportunity to test new and innovative ways of providing access to care for populations that are unable to access care through the traditional dental care system,” said Chris Wiant, President and CEO of Caring for Colorado Foundation.

About Dental Aid

Dental Aid provides compassionate, affordable, high quality dental care and education to low-income and uninsured residents of Colorado’s Boulder and Broomfield counties.

The long term clinical focus of Dental Aid follows a chronic disease management model directed at prevention, education and treatment in the early stages of disease. In addition to direct clinical care, Dental Aid prioritizes education and outreach to high-risk patients including:

- Families and children of all ages
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and HIV/AIDS
- People with physical, mental or emotional disabilities

Dental Aid was one of the first stand-alone, nonprofit, complete-care dental clinics in the U.S. The organization was founded in 1974 as a referral organization and opened its first full-service clinic in 1980. Today, Dental Aid provides dental care to more than 8,000 children and adults annually. It provides services through three clinics (Boulder, Longmont and Louisville, CO) and a satellite clinic at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless. In addition, portable dental equipment is used to bring dental care to the homebound or those living in long term care facilities. For more information, visit www.dentalaid.org.

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SMILES Dental Project is funded jointly by Caring for Colorado Foundation www.caringforcolorado.org and the Colorado Health Foundation. www.coloradohealth.org. To learn more, visit the SMILES blog at www.caringforcolorado.blogspot.com.

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