



For Immediate Release

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Grant Program will test a new model of oral health care delivery throughout Colorado.

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Six organizations across Colorado have been invited to participate in the SMILES Dental Project. SMILES (*Spanning Miles in Linking Everyone to Services*) Dental Project is a 5-year, \$4.7 million initiative to pilot a new workforce model in Colorado to bring access to dental services to low-income, vulnerable and isolated Coloradans, especially children and seniors. Registered Dental Hygienists will be integrated into community spaces to provide preventive dental care and will be linked to a dentist via tele-health technology to establish a dental home for the patient. Earlier this year, House Bill 15-309 became law to facilitate the adoption of this model. The new law allows a certified Registered Dental Hygienist to place interim therapeutic restorations under the supervision of a dentist, via telehealth.

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.

Of the 6 funded organizations, 5 are located in rural communities. Funded sites and the communities they serve are:

- Dental Aid, Inc. serving Boulder and Broomfield counties.
- Summit Community Care Clinic, serving Chafee, Grand, Lake, Park and Summit counties.
- Northeast Colorado Health Department, in partnership with Rural Communities Resource Center, serving Cheyenne, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma counties.
- Tri-County Health Network serving Delta, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties.
- High Plains Community Health Center, in partnership with Valley-Wide Health Systems, serving Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers counties.
- Mountain Family Health Center serving Eagle, Garfield and Pitkin counties.

“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.

The Goals of SMILES Dental Project are to:

- Ensure that underserved people have access to preventive services and a dental home.
- Reach Coloradans that are either unable to, or do not, access the current system of dental care within the traditional dental office.
- Expand the oral health infrastructure to provide services in the most appropriate community setting.
- Strengthen Colorado's oral health workforce by expanding the scope of care a dental hygienist is licensed to perform.

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

