

Focus On Oral Health



A newsletter for North Dakota's oral health community

November 2010

North Dakota offers dental loan repayment program

Several loan repayment options are available to dentists who choose to practice in North Dakota. The North Dakota Dental Loan Repayment Program offers financial assistance in an effort to attract dentists to practice in areas of need in North Dakota. Three loan options are available, including:

- Loan repayment for dentists who practice in rural and underserved areas. Three loans are available per year, each for up to \$80,000. Each dentist selected must enter into a four-year contract with the North Dakota Department of Health, promising to practice full-time for four years in the selected community.
- Loan repayment for dentists who will practice in public health settings or nonprofit clinics that use sliding fee scales to bill patients. Three loans are available per biennium for up to \$60,000. Each dentist selected must sign a contract promising to practice full-time for three years.
- Grants to assist dentists with establishing a dental practice in rural areas. Two grants are available each year, providing up to \$50,000. Dentist applying for the grant must have graduated from an accredited dental school within the previous five years and must be licensed to practice in North Dakota. The community where the dentist will practice must pay half the award (\$25,000), and the dentist must commit to practicing in the community for a minimum of five years. Grant funds can be used to purchase buildings or equipment or assist with operating expenses.

The loan repayment program has been in existence since 2002 and nearly 30 dentists have benefited from the programs. According to current data, all dentists who have received loan repayment and grant awards have continued to live and work in North Dakota.

Current loan recipient, Kristin Schoch, works for Bridging the Dental Gap in Bismarck. She said the loan has been a big help.

Schoch said, "Since I paid out-of-state tuition for dental school, I had a large amount of debt when I graduated. This loan repayment program has helped a lot with paying off that debt. Plus, the loan repayment made it easier for me to move home to North Dakota to practice dentistry."

Dental students who will graduate within one year after the date of application may apply, along with dentists who have graduated during the year preceding the application. Licensed dentists who move to North Dakota and have outstanding education loans are also eligible to apply.

Applications must be received by April 30 of each year. A dental license is not needed at the time of the application.

Preference is given to dentists who will practice in communities with fewer than 2,500 residents and to those who will accept Medicaid patients.

More information about the dental loan repayment program can be obtained by contacting the North Dakota Department of Health's Primary Care Office at 701.328.2353 or www.ndhealth.gov/pc.

Coalition News



At its September 2010 meeting, the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition received updates about the following topics:

501(c)3 Status – Marcia Olson, director of Bridging the Dental Gap and temporary employee of the North Dakota Department of Health, will be assisting with the necessary paperwork and other duties needed to achieve an official nonprofit status for the coalition.

Update on new state plan – The North Dakota Department of Health’s Oral Health Program, with assistance and input from the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition, is in the process of updating the burden of disease and state plan document. New goals, objectives and strategies have been developed, and NDDoH staff and contractors are working on the text and design of the document.

Prevention Committee update – Nineteen North Dakota schools currently participate in the School Fluoride Mouthrinse Program. Most communities have converted to water systems that provide fluoride, but there is still a need for the mouth rinse option in a few areas. Elementary students are given one dose of the rinse to swish and spit once each week. Rinse procedures are supervised by school personnel.



A second-grade student from Riverside Elementary in Bismarck receives a dental sealant during a Seal! North Dakota sealant event. See the next issue of Focus On Oral Health for more information about the event.

Grant provides for additional dental care for children and the elderly

The North Dakota Department of Health’s Oral Health Program has been awarded a three-year grant for approximately \$750,000 from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The grant was applied for as a joint project between NDDoH, Bridging the Dental Gap and the Ronald McDonald House Charities Care Mobile project.

Grant monies will be split between the three programs, two of which will focus on children’s dental services and one of which will focus on helping the elderly with their oral health.

Bridging the Dental Gap (BDG), a safety-net dental clinic in Bismarck, will be using the grant funds to purchase equipment and supplies, and provide staff so they can do outreach and satellite care in nursing homes in the area.

Marcia Olson, director of BDG, said, “Elderly nursing home patients have many issues, the least of which is transportation to doctors and dentists and transferring from wheelchairs. Providing dental care for residents has been overlooked and is actually a part of nursing home licensure requirements. We hope to offer a great alternative for hygiene and treatment to those who are not easily ambulatory.”

BDG will begin offering services in the Bismarck-Mandan area and, over the three-year period, plans to reach a growing number of nursing homes.

Funds awarded to the Ronald McDonald House Charities will be used for assistance in development and implementation of Care Mobile operations in western North Dakota, targeting children birth to age 21 at high risk for tooth decay. Initially, a Care Mobile vehicle will visit schools and communities that are prioritized by poverty levels and percentage of children in free- and reduced-fee school lunch programs. Other priority areas will include community health centers without dental services and Head Start programs.

During year one, funds will be used to assist with the purchase of a Care Mobile vehicle, dental equipment and supplies; hire a dentist, dental hygienist and program manager; and develop clinical, managerial and operating policies, procedures and quality assurance standards. During years two and three, funds will be used to support a full-time program manager and a portion of the dentist’s salary.

Kathy Keiser, executive director of the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Bismarck, said, “This grant is just what we needed to help make the project a reality in North Dakota and to ensure the sustainability of the project. We have many children who badly need dental care, and this project will help to ensure they can get that care.”



Grant funds will be used to assist with the purchase of a Care Mobile vehicle.

The Care Mobile project is seeking additional financial support and grants in order to continue and sustain the services.

NDDoH’s portion will support Seal! North Dakota, a program that provides dental sealants to grade-school children who do not have access to dental care. In year one, equipment and supplies will be purchased, including portable dental operatory units, chairs and sealant supplies. In year two, wages will be provided for the public health hygienists who will provide the services, and in year three, work will begin to expand the program statewide.

Robyn Stearns, Seal!ND program coordinator, is excited to help children. Robyn said, “It’s just heart-breaking when you see children who aren’t able to get regular dental care. Many times their teeth are decaying, and that causes enough pain that they have a hard time functioning in school or even having fun. Now, these kids will be able to get dental sealants that will help prevent tooth decay. They won’t have to worry about their teeth hurting and can just have fun being kids.”

Robyn also talked about how the program will save money for families and taxpayers. Robyn said, “Sealants applied early on provide an effective barrier against decay, thereby ensuring a future of good oral health for the child and a cost savings for parents, insurance companies, and state and federal programs like Medicaid.”

Items Available

A brochure entitled *Dental Care For Your Child* is available from the North Dakota Department of Health’s Oral Health Program. The brochure includes tips for childrens’ dental visits, ideas about how to help children care for their teeth and a spot to record information about a child’s dentist (clinic name, phone number, etc.).

The brochure recently won an award from the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC). Copies can be ordered by calling 701.328.2356 or e-mailing cebach@nd.gov.



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Join the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition

The North Dakota Oral Health Coalition (NDOHC) represents public, private and nonprofit organizations and individuals interested in developing and promoting innovative strategies to achieve optimal oral health for all North Dakotans.

If you are interested in joining the coalition, complete and mail the application below, call 701.328.2356 or 800.472.2286 (press 1), or send an e-mail to cebach@nd.gov.

The next coalition meeting will be Dec. 17, 2010, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Bridging the Dental Gap in Bismarck.



**North Dakota Oral Health Coalition
Membership Application**

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Send to: North Dakota Oral Health Coalition, North Dakota
Department of Health, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301,
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The Focus On Oral Health newsletter
is published three times per year by:

**Oral Health Program
Division of Family Health
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200
701.328.2356
www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth
Volume 4, Issue 3**

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