



The Oral Health Foundation Awards Nearly \$900,000 in New Grants to Six Organizations in Massachusetts Working to Reduce Oral Health Disparities in Disadvantaged Populations

Boston, MA, October 21, 2004 -- The Oral Health Foundation today announced that it has selected six organizations to receive nearly \$900,000 in new grant money to provide accessible dental care to vulnerable populations across the state. The grant recipients include: the Brockton Neighborhood Health Center in Brockton, \$150,000; Hillcrest Dental Care in Pittsfield, \$200,000; the Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center in Waltham, \$106,000; Massachusetts Coalition for Oral Health in Boston, \$63,000; REACH Community Health Foundation in North Adams, \$56,000; and the Springfield Oral Health Initiative in Springfield, \$282,000.

The Oral Health Foundation was established in 2000 by DSM, doing business as Delta Dental Plan of Massachusetts, to award annual grants to organizations that are working towards reducing oral health disparities in disadvantaged populations across Massachusetts. In addition to the new grants, ongoing program support will bring the Oral Health Foundation grant awards to nearly \$1.5 million in 2004.

“The Oral Health Foundation is focused on reaching underserved adults and children in Massachusetts in the communities where they live and go to school in order to provide better access to preventive dental services and patient education,” said Bryan Spence, spokesperson for the Oral Health Foundation. “Through our Foundation’s grants, we are able to help programs reduce oral health disparities and increase oral health awareness.”

The grant money will be used to fund the following initiatives:

- ***Brockton Neighborhood Health Center*** in Brockton will use its \$150,000 grant to extend its dental services into Brockton faith-based elementary schools. The Center will implement a primary prevention outreach program for second and sixth graders. In addition, the grant will fund a dental access coordinator who will make sure that children receive follow-up care once they are identified as needing services. This person will also be engaged in helping remove barriers to receiving dental services for all patients in the Neighborhood Center’s programs. The

Brockton Health Center serves a diverse patient population, 79% of whom live in poverty. An additional 20% have income levels below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

- ***Hillcrest Dental Care*** in Pittsfield will use its \$200,000 grant to expand its treatment capacity by 75% to serve its special needs patients, including children, adolescents, and adults, as well as its MassHealth and other low-income clients without insurance. The current Hillcrest facility will add three new dental chairs and new specialized treatment equipment. Hillcrest Dental Care is the largest provider in the Berkshire region for dental care to MassHealth, low-income, and special needs patients. Hillcrest Dental Care currently has a caseload of 5,100 patients, of whom approximately 3,800, or 75%, are special needs patients (persons who are physically and/or cognitively challenged, many of whom reside in residential treatment centers, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities). Almost 1,500 Hillcrest Dental Care patients have no dental insurance.
- ***The Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center*** in Waltham will use its \$106,000 grant to establish a comprehensive dental services program for low-income and uninsured people at its new Waltham site. The grant money will be added to a MassHealth Access Program (MAP) grant of \$150,000. Together, the monies will be used to offer a comprehensive range of dental services to its patients. The Center will also offer dental health promotional activities and dental screenings at local community-based organizations such as public schools and senior centers. The Center serves a diverse patient population of whom 75% are uninsured, over 60% are at or below federal poverty income guidelines, and many are recent immigrants with language barriers and little or no understanding of how to access the health care system.
- ***Massachusetts Coalition for Oral Health*** (MCOH) in Boston will use its \$63,000 grant to coordinate a dental sealant and referral program for second and third grade children in the Boston Public School system. The MCOH along with the “Seal, Educate, Advocate Learning” (SEAL) program, Boston University School of Dental Medicine, and Brookside Community Health Center, will all come together under the name Smart Smiles in the Boston Public Schools, in association with The Forsyth Institute, to provide free preventative care to children in 14 public schools in Boston during the first year of the grant. The program will provide school-based oral health education, preventive fluoride application, dental sealants, and referral

assistance for follow-up care to second and third grade children in the Boston public schools. In a 2003 assessment of Massachusetts' third grade public school children, Boston schoolchildren had much poorer oral health than the statewide average with more untreated dental cavities and less preventive sealants.

- ***REACH Community Health Foundation*** in North Adams will use its \$56,000 grant to expand its oral health education curriculum and a school-based sealant program in area elementary schools. In addition, REACH will provide case management for those children identified with oral health needs. To accomplish these goals, REACH will embed dental health education into the health curriculum at every elementary grade level and establish a dental sealant program for children in grades one and two who do not now receive this procedure. Currently, northern Berkshire County faces significant barriers to adequate oral health care related to the high rates of poverty in the region.
- ***The Springfield Oral Health Initiative*** in Springfield will use its \$282,000 grant to establish a licensed dental clinic at the German Gerena Elementary School in Springfield. The grant will be used to hire dental professionals and to buy the dental equipment necessary to perform preventive treatment on the students. There are currently thousands of students in the Springfield public school system in serious need of dental care. Roughly 72% of this population is eligible for MassHealth dental benefits, but most children are not receiving these services.

The Oral Health Foundation was established by DSM in January 2000 and has given grants to qualified community organizations for five years. DSM continues to increase the Foundation's endowment each year and plans to expand its grant-making capabilities to \$2 million in 2005, and \$4 million in 2006 and beyond. DSM, the provider of Delta Dental Plan benefits in Massachusetts, is the largest provider of dental benefits in the state.