

## **The Oral Health Foundation Awards \$790,000 in New Grants to Eight Massachusetts Organizations Working to Improve Access to Dental Care in Disadvantaged Populations**

Boston, MA -- The Oral Health Foundation today announced that it has selected eight organizations to receive \$790,000 in new grant money to provide accessible dental care to vulnerable populations across the state. Implementation Grants were awarded to Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program in Boston, Community Health Center of Franklin County in Turners Falls, Community Health Connections, Inc. in Fitchburg, Lazarus House Ministries in Lawrence, and Norfolk Adult Day Health Center Elder Dental Project in Norwood. Clinical Equipment Replacement Grants were given to Boston Medical Center General Dental Clinic in Boston and Dimock Community Health Center in Roxbury. One Planning Grant was awarded to Dukes County Health Council's Oral Health Working Group in West Tisbury.

In addition to these new grants, the Oral Health Foundation is giving over \$1.2 million in continuing grants to ongoing multi-year programs and other initiatives. In total, the Oral Health Foundation will award over \$2 million in grant money in this cycle. Since its founding in 2000 by DSM, the Oral Health Foundation has awarded nearly \$6 million in grants to a variety of organizations and community groups that are focused on improving the oral health for underserved populations across Massachusetts through increased access to quality dental care.

“By building strong partnerships with a wide array of safety-net providers, we are able to significantly increase the comprehensive, preventive dental services available to vulnerable adults and children in Massachusetts,” said Bryan Spence, spokesperson for the Oral Health Foundation.

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

Implementation Grants:

- **Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP)** in Boston will use its \$106,000 grant to open a new two-chair dental clinic at the Pine Street Inn, the largest homeless shelter in New England, to serve the homeless population of Greater Boston. Homeless people suffer unaddressed dental problems at epidemic levels and average eight years since their last dental visit. The clinic, which is expected to treat over 1,000 patients per year, will perform a full range

of free dental services for this severely underserved population, including extractions, dentures, emergency services, and restorative work, as well as providing free oral health preventive services and oral hygiene education.

- **Community Health Center of Franklin County** in Turners Falls will use its \$200,000 grant to develop and equip a new dental clinic in the North Quabbin area to increase access to dental services for low-income, uninsured, and Medicaid-enrolled adults and children. The new clinic will provide comprehensive preventive and primary dental services to all who need them without regard to income, insurance, ability to pay, or past medical history. There is an enormous need for dental services in the North Quabbin region, but a limited number of providers who accept Medicaid.
- **Community Health Connections, Inc.** in Fitchburg will use its \$50,000 grant to expand its dental services by opening a new satellite clinic in Gardner. In its first three years of operation, the Gardner dental clinic will treat over 7,500 patients who are not currently accessing care at the organization's Fitchburg site. The Gardner dental clinic will provide preventive and restorative dental services to the area's underinsured and uninsured populations, about 14,525 people (about 39% of the area's residents), and to the nearly 5,000 people enrolled in MassHealth.
- **Lazarus House Ministries** in Lawrence will use its \$156,000 grant to significantly expand the oral health services available to underserved and vulnerable adults and children in Greater Lawrence. The money will be used for expansion of their dental clinic to full-time operation at the St. Luke's Clinic. Once the new dental clinic is operational, it is expected that patient visits will increase from 550 to more than 3,000 annually. According to the 2000 census, the median family income in Lawrence is half the Massachusetts average, the proportion of the population below the poverty level (24%) is more than 2.5 times the state average, and almost one in three children under 18 (32%) live in poverty. A recent study found that 26% of the overall adult population is uninsured and 36% of the adult Hispanic population (the majority demographic in the city) is uninsured.
- **Norfolk Adult Day Health Center Elder Dental Project** in Norwood will use its \$76,000 grant to provide access to oral health care for low-income seniors, aged 60 and over, in southern Norfolk County. The grant money will be used to help create and coordinate a network of local

dentists who agree to see seniors at a reduced fee and to pay for a program manager to screen potential patients for eligibility and to manage the dentist-patient relationship. A recent survey of seniors in this area found that 78% had no dental insurance. Data collected during a recent free screening program also revealed that 43% of the seniors screened had progressive gum disease, 31% had untreated tooth decay, 22% were in pain, 14% needed immediate extractions, and 8% had suspicious lesions requiring biopsy to test for oral cancer.

#### Clinical Equipment Replacement Grants:

- **Boston Medical Center General Dental Clinic** in Boston will use its \$50,000 grant to renovate and purchase equipment for two outdated operatories so that the clinic can increase the capacity of its facility to provide comprehensive preventive oral health services to more low-income and uninsured medically compromised patients. With new equipment, the clinic will be able to see at least 33% more patients each year. This will also increase the Boston Medical Center's ability to train up to 20 additional dental students to provide oral healthcare to these vulnerable populations. The majority of the dental clinic's patients have complex medical, physical, and psychological needs and cannot be treated at traditional dental practices or dental schools.
- **Dimock Community Health Center** in Roxbury will use its \$100,000 grant to upgrade and replace aging dental clinic equipment to provide better oral health care for the 7,000 low-income patients it serves annually. With a decrease in neighborhood clinics in the last three years, many underserved residents are now being treated by the Dimock clinic. The new equipment will enable clinicians to provide preventive and reconstructive oral health care to these additional and current patients. The clinic expects to increase the new patients it is able to serve by 1,000 individuals. Approximately 29% of the individuals that the clinic serves live below the poverty level.

#### Planning Grant:

- **Dukes County Health Council's Oral Health Working Group** in West Tisbury will use its \$51,000 grant to design a comprehensive dental program for Martha's Vineyard low-income residents. There are substantial barriers to good oral health care for many Martha's Vineyard residents, including a shortage of dentists, language barriers, and difficulty accessing services on

the mainland due to the cost, time, and inconvenience of travel. There are a limited number of dentists on the island that accept MassHealth even though there are 2,000 MassHealth members living year-round on the island. Another 3,200 do not have any kind of health insurance. There is also an urgent need for preventive programs for children. There are minimal or no oral health education programs in the preschools and elementary schools.

The Oral Health Foundation was established by DSM in January 2000 and has awarded grants to qualified community organizations for six years. DSM continues to increase the Foundation's endowment each year and plans to expand its grant-making capabilities to \$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. The Oral Health Foundation's website is [www.oralhealthfoundation.org](http://www.oralhealthfoundation.org).

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