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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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### **DentaQuest Foundation Grants Tackle Oral Health Awareness in Maryland**

**Baltimore**—The DentaQuest Foundation is making a major investment to improve oral health literacy and close the disparities gap among children and youth in Maryland.

The Foundation recently awarded two grants: \$331,343 to the University of Maryland for a statewide oral health literacy and awareness campaign and \$202,886 to support the development of the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC).

In 2006, over one-third of Maryland kindergarteners and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders had untreated decay in their primary teeth, while over 70 percent of children in the state's Medicaid program, which disproportionately covers minority populations, have never even seen a dentist.

Both grants support a two-fold strategy for raising oral health awareness, particularly within low-income populations and communities of color. Researchers at the University of Maryland's School of Public Health will survey 4,000 parents and health care providers for their knowledge, opinions and practices about preventive oral health and then use the information gathered to develop an oral health literacy intervention model for use in Maryland and other states.

Grant funds will also be used to establish the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC), an independent advocacy organization that will implement the oral health literacy plan throughout the state. The Coalition will work with an array of organizations—ranging from policymakers, health care providers, hospital groups, and educational entities to child welfare advocacies—to prioritize oral health as a critical component of health and to promote community and statewide solutions.

"Currently, there isn't a single organization in the state that can coordinate an evidence-based oral health literacy campaign that focuses on reducing oral health disparities," says Dr. Harry Goodman, director of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Office of Oral Health. "With these grants, the DentaQuest Foundation has really stepped up at a time when we know there's a problem, and there's tremendous willingness to do something about it, but the public resources simply aren't available."

"Progress in addressing oral health disparities requires the support and engagement of the entire community. Equipped with effective tools and knowledge, community leaders, parents, health care providers, educators and the general public can more easily tackle oral health problems," explains Ralph Fuccillo, DentaQuest Foundation President. "We applaud the statewide response to gaps in access and feel certain that these grants will further Maryland's leadership a national model for oral health awareness and fighting disparities."

The grants support the mission of the DentaQuest Foundation to strengthen community initiatives and strategies, to strengthen the dental care safety net, to increase access to care for vulnerable children, and ultimately, to improve oral health. In addition to these two grants, the Foundation also made a special grant to the Deamonte Driver Dental Project.

### **About the DentaQuest Foundation**

The DentaQuest Foundation is committed to optimal oral health for all Americans through its support of prevention and access to affordable oral health care, and through its partnerships with funders, policy makers and community leaders. For more information please visit [dentaquestfoundation.org](http://dentaquestfoundation.org).

### **About DentaQuest**

DentaQuest is a leader in oral health supported by benefits, philanthropy and research. DentaQuest is one of the nation's largest dental benefits providers in the nation, serving more than 14 million members through both commercial and government dental programs. DentaQuest provides high quality dental benefits programs, and is a partner in the community, committed to improving oral health through access, innovation and affordability. For more information please visit [dentaquest.com](http://dentaquest.com).