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ORAL HEALTH FOUNDATION PROVIDES \$4M IN GRANT FUNDING
Programs increase oral health care access for thousands of residents

(Boston, MA) –The Oral Health Foundation recently provided \$4 million in funding to several agencies throughout the state, which will collectively increase access to oral health care for thousands of Massachusetts residents.

The funding is an important step in addressing significant disparities in the status of oral health care among racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. “The Oral Health of Massachusetts Children,” a report released in January, 2008 by Delta Dental and the Catalyst Institute, demonstrates significant disparities in the status of children’s oral health among racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. This report found that these children not only experience more severe levels of disease than their white peers, but are also much less likely to receive treatment. The study reported that 19,000 children - more than one in four - start school with significant dental disease.

“As a leader in promoting the oral health of all people, the Oral Health Foundation is committed to eliminating the significant oral health disparities among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups outlined in this report,” said Ralph Fuccillo, President of the Oral Health Foundation. “Our goal is to ensure that *all* Massachusetts residents have access to the kind of preventive treatment services that can eliminate dental disease.”

During 2007, the Foundation sought to reduce disparities and increase access by providing funding in these main areas – enhancing access for underserved populations, increasing awareness through the Watch Your Mouth Campaign, and strengthening cultural competency training for oral health professionals.

Since community health centers provide the majority of oral health care to uninsured or underserved populations, the Foundation provided \$1.9 million to community health centers across the state. The funds will be used to strengthen the safety net of dental services in Massachusetts.

The Foundation has also made a funding commitment to support cultural competency training opportunities for oral health professionals. The Foundation has partnered with the Massachusetts Dental Society to develop, coordinate and deliver training programs across the state that enhance the cultural competency of dental professionals and reduce barriers to ongoing care.

In addition to funding, several community health centers also received free consultation services through a program called Safety Net Solutions. Safety Net Solutions, a program of the Catalyst Institute, is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dental programs within community health centers, hospitals and other settings in order to expand capacity and access. The Watch Your Mouth (WYM) Campaign, is part of the Foundation's multi-year funding commitment. WYM is a communications campaign designed to educate key decision makers. "If a child's mouth isn't healthy, neither is his body. This is why we need strong leadership as well as programs that make children's oral health a priority," explained Judi Foley, senior program officer at The Oral Health Foundation.

The Oral Health Foundation was established in 2000 by Dental Service of Massachusetts to improve the oral health of underserved communities in Massachusetts through programs that increase access to high quality preventive oral health services. The Foundation reaches vulnerable populations through its grants to community-based organizations that provide oral health services and promote the importance of preventive oral health.

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