

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation
9000 Northpark Drive
Johnston, IA 50131
www.deltadentalia.com

Contact:
Jill Hamilton
Director Communications and Marketing
(515) 261-5526
jhamilton@deltadentalia.com

Lifelong Smiles Convenes to Address Unique Oral Health Needs of Iowa Seniors *Coalition Announced Priorities and Projects in Davenport Today*

Davenport, Iowa (November 14, 2014) – Iowa's senior residents are keeping their natural teeth longer than any previous generation due to advances in oral health care. With these improvements, however, come changes in the continuing dental needs of seniors, particularly frail and functionally dependent older adults. A public-private partnership gathered in Davenport today to kick off a sustained campaign to address these needs.

The Lifelong Smiles Coalition was formed to increase access to oral health care for older Iowans. The group consists of 13 members that include state agencies, advocacy organizations, trade associations, health professionals, academic institutions, and funders.

"This group of experts working together is critically important," said Mary Jane Carothers, chairperson of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and Director of Quality & Clinical Services at Iowa Health Care Association. "We look forward to marshaling our resources toward the common goal of helping every Iowa nursing home resident and homebound elderly person have access to oral health care."

The numbers tell the story of the need for this work:

- There are more than 450,000 adults over the age of 65 living in Iowa.
- Three in four adults over the age of 65 do not have dental insurance, which is often a barrier to care.
- One-third of adults over the age of 65 have untreated tooth decay.

In addition to strategic planning to create sustainable ways to help this population, Coalition members are working to improve education and training, care coordination, and policies. The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation has provided nearly \$600,000 in grants to assist in the continuation of this work. Grants include:

- The Iowa Department of Public Health's I-Smile™ Silver project will receive \$360,100 over the next two years to develop a community-based system of care to improve the oral health of Iowans age 60 and older. The pilot project will work to prevent dental disease, increase access to oral health care, and maintain overall health for homebound and nursing home residents in Scott and Lee Counties.
- The Iowa CareGivers received a Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation grant for \$135,516 to provide oral health education for direct care workers, helping them better address the oral health care needs of homebound and nursing home residents.

- The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics has established an Office of Education and Training to coordinate, develop, and evaluate continuing dental education programs for dentists, hygienists, and assistants, specifically targeted at geriatric oral health care. The Office was established with the help of a \$102,100 grant from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation.

"The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation is proud to support this effort focused on the dental health of older adults," said Jeff Russell, president of the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. "The Foundation's long-term goals focus on improving the oral health of and access to care for Iowa's children and seniors. Through the work of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition, more aging Iowans will have access to dental care that can help improve their overall health."

Today's announcement at the Scott County Administrative Center involved remarks from representatives of several partner organizations, as well as the presentation of a check from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation representing the nearly \$600,000 in grants listed above.

Organizations involved in the Lifelong Smiles Coalition are:

- Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Iowa CareGivers
- Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department on Aging
- Iowa Health Care Association
- Iowa Medicaid Enterprise
- Iowa Primary Care Association/Safety Net Collaborative
- Iowa Public Health Association
- LeadingAge Iowa
- The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics
- The University of Iowa College of Nursing
- Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation

For more information about the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and its work, contact Elizabeth Faber, Coalition consultant, at elizabethfaber@gmail.com.

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About Delta Dental of Iowa

Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit health services organization, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation's mission is to support and improve the oral health of Iowans. In 2013, \$1.7 million was provided in oral health support and improvement projects in Iowa.