



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 21, 2009

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Children's Dental Program Gets Boost to Help Prevent Decay

Seal-A-Smile Program Gets Federal Grant, Matching Dollars from Delta Dental

Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Karen Timberlake announces that Wisconsin's *Seal-A-Smile* program is receiving more than \$1.3 million in public and private funds to help provide preventive dental services for children.

"Too many children are going without the basic dental care they need, which is crucial to their overall health and success," says Department Secretary Karen Timberlake. "If a child's tooth hurts, she may not be able to eat – or he may not be able to concentrate in school. Parents and children tell us these types of stories from across our state, and these funds will truly help make a difference."

The Department will receive \$275,000 each year for the next three years from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to support the *Seal-A-Smile* program. In addition to the HRSA funds, Delta Dental of Wisconsin will be donating \$240,000 per year for the next two years. This totals \$1.3 million in new grants for the *Seal-A-Smile* program.

"Delta Dental has long advocated sealants as part of the coverage offered under our group dental insurance plans we offer. We also have a history of providing charitable grants to organizations that have made sealants more available to economically disadvantaged children," says Dennis Brown, President and CEO of Delta Dental.

Dental sealants are thin coatings that are applied to teeth to protect them from tooth decay by keeping the germs and food particles that can cause tooth decay out of the grooves of the back teeth. Dental decay is the number one chronic disease of childhood, particularly among low-income children who often do not have access to a dentist.

"There's no question that sealants are among the most effective tools that dentists have to prevent tooth decay and preserve good oral health," says Dr. Fred Eichmiller, Vice President and Science Officer of Delta Dental. "That in turn leads to a significant reduction in long-term costs."

The \$1.3 million in grant funds will be distributed to community-based programs that offer sealant programs by using a competitive process. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued earlier in the month and applications are due October 31st. Funds will be awarded to those programs which target children at highest risk for tooth decay. Funds will also be available for community-based oral health programs. The RFP process will be complete by the end of the year and funds will be available to local programs in early 2010.

"We all want our children to grow up healthy. The Department has routinely applied for grant funding and I'm pleased we were able to include their efforts in our state budget. We also appreciate the extra assistance from Delta Dental. In these difficult state budget times, it's so important that we combine our efforts to help serve more people," says Senator Julie Lassa, who included the grant in the budget.

Seal-A-Smile information: http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/Oral_Health/Old%20Programs/SealASmile.htm

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