

***Abstract: Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Expansion Grant Program***

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The DHMH Office of Oral Health is submitting a grant application in response to HRSA funding announcement no. HRSA-15-070, Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Expansion Grant Program (PIOHQI). The goal of this grant program is to reduce the prevalence of oral disease in both pregnant women and infants most at risk for disease through improved access to quality oral health care. Specifically, the project aims to: 1) reduce prevalence of oral disease in pregnant women and infants, reducing early childhood caries; 2) increase preventive care utilization for pregnant women; 3) establish a dental home for infants by age 1; and 4) reduce dental expenditures. To do so, the OOH will employ multiple strategies to improve the oral health literacy and awareness of low-income pregnant women and the oral health behaviors of health care practitioner groups to increase oral health care utilization for the mother and her child throughout their lifespan. This is important because, currently, pregnant women in Maryland are underutilizing their Medicaid Dental Benefit. Ultimately, by linking the delivery of oral health with primary care, the overall well-being of pregnant women and infants will be improved.

To support this initiative, the OOH will establish PIOHQI project infrastructure by recruiting and hiring a Project Manager (who will oversee all project related activities), as well as a part-time Evaluation Specialist. The OOH will also convene a Project Advisory Board comprised of representatives from various health professional groups throughout the State who will be charged with providing oversight and guidance throughout the project period. The OOH proposes to collaborate with the University of Maryland, School of Public Health to conduct a survey and focus group of pregnant women, and survey medical and dental providers who reside and/or practice in state “hot spots”. In addition, the OOH also proposes to provide training to medical professionals on the importance of perinatal and infant oral health care, during times of increased access to overall care. Further, the OOH will develop and implement an Early Head Start Oral Health Adoption program for accredited Dental Hygiene Programs to provide oral health education and referral resources to Early Head Start enrolled pregnant women and infants. Based on real time data from the surveys and other findings from these projects, and with guidance from the Project Advisory Board, the OOH will be able to plan, develop, and evaluate evidence-based statewide interventions, targeting perinatal women and infants. In order to evaluate the impact of the grant and measure outcomes, the OOH aims to annually analyze PRAMS and Medicaid utilization data for pregnant women and Medicaid data for infant dental visits. A major advantage in Maryland is the strength of its partnerships and the OOH will collaborate with several key internal DHMH and external partners and use their networks to distribute important oral health messages derived from the project. A key DHMH partnership is the Maternal and Child Health Bureau that includes the Office of Surveillance and Quality Initiatives, WIC, and the Office for Genetics and People with Special Health Care Needs. The Office of Women’s Health within the Office of Surveillance and Quality Initiatives, with its ties to the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists will serve as key collaborator on this project. Another important DHMH collaboration will be with the Office of Minority Health and Disparities. Key external partners include the Maryland Dental Action Coalition, the State Head Start Collaboration Office, and the University of Maryland, School of Dentistry.

Through this project, the OOH aims to use pregnancy as an integral point to learn and establish new oral health practices to better oral health outcomes for both mother and child for a lifetime.