

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Project Title: Expanding Networks for and Access to Oral Health Services and Education for Pregnant and Perinatal Women and Infants Across Minnesota

Applicant Organization Name: Children's Dental Services

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Grant Funds Requested: \$250,000/year

Needs to be addressed: Minnesota has a critical need for improved access to oral health services for the underserved. Low-income Minnesota pregnant and perinatal women and infants are unable to receive dental care commensurate with the medical services they receive. According to Minnesota's 2013 Report to the Center for Medicaid Services only 37% of public program patients in Minnesota (children and adults) receive dental treatment or education each year. Roughly half of children insured by public programs are unable to receive dental services until there is an emergency, such as bleeding of the gums, pain, and/or infection.ⁱ At present there is minimal access to dental services for low-income pregnant women and infants in Minnesota because of a lack of dentists who see patients covered by public programs (Medicaid and MNCare), a lack of sliding fee care, the high cost of treating tooth decay for those who must pay out-of-pocket because they lack commercial insurance, poor public transit infrastructure particularly in rural communities, and a lack of dental providers offering culturally targeted care.

Population served: This project will serve 2,500 pregnant and perinatal women and infants across Minnesota's 87 counties annually, totaling 10,000 over the four-year project period.

Proposed services: Under this proposal, CDS will expand direct services and oral health education across Minnesota through partnerships with community agencies including Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Early Head Start (EHS), Early Childhood Dental Networks (ECDN), Early Childhood Family Education Programs (ECFE), the Department of Health, and other primary medical providers targeting care to pregnant and perinatal women and infants. CDS and collaborating partners will develop a comprehensive, shared system for identifying women in need of oral health services, referring them to accessible services and following up to ensure receipt of care and connection to ongoing dental home.

Long-term, this project will: 1) Reduce prevalence of oral disease in pregnant and perinatal women and infants; 2) Reduce oral health disparities within the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) community; 3) Reduce Early Childhood Caries (ECC) throughout early childhood including Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN); and 4) Increase utilization of preventive dental care and restorative services among pregnant and perinatal women.

ⁱ Minnesota Department of Human Services (2001). *Dental Access for Minnesota Health Care Programs Beneficiaries: Report to the 2001 Minnesota Legislature.*