

**Title:** Virginia Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Expansion Grant Program  
**Applicant Organization Name:** Virginia Department of Health  
**Address:** 109 Governor Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Richmond, VA 23219  
**Project Director Name:** Susan Pharr  
**Contact: Email:** susan.pharr@vdh.virginia.gov **Phone:** 804-864-7782 **FAX:** 804-864-7783  
**Web Site Address:** <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OFHS/childandfamily/dental/>

### **Abstract**

Access to oral health care across the lifespan is an important factor that influences overall health. However, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has noted that gaps in adequate care remain, particularly for pregnant women and infants. Findings from Virginia's Title V Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment show that many women may not be receiving adequate oral health care during pregnancy; only 43.6% of Virginia Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (VA PRAMS) respondents report that they saw a dentist at any time during pregnancy; a figure that dropped to only 24.6% in the lowest income group. Moreover, although only 1.3% of respondents with household incomes  $\geq$ \$50,000 reported experiencing a dental problem during pregnancy but not seeking care, the prevalence of this outcome among the lowest income group rose to 16.7%.

As the oral health of the mother and her infant may affect lifelong risk for further dental disease, the VDH Dental Health Program (DHP) sees the need for increased prenatal and infant oral health capacity and services. The pregnancy period is a time of greater contact with health professionals and may therefore be a particularly good time to reach at-risk populations who might otherwise not receive services. VDH's proposed program would be integrated into current public health efforts, to maximize access to services, scalability and care coordination. By relying on a proven remote supervision dental hygienist (RSDH) model, integrating oral health referral and care coordination into services such as the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and home visiting, collaborating through a Project Advisory Board (PAB) with key partners and local stakeholders to maximize reach and effectiveness, and training dental and non-dental professionals in the importance of oral health care at these critical periods in the mothers' and infants' lives, VDH hopes to achieve the following project goal: to improve access to oral health care for pregnant women and infants who are most at risk for disease through integration into the primary care delivery system.

As a component of a well-functioning oral health project, VDH will track processes, outcomes and impacts through rigorous surveillance and evaluation. Perinatal and infant oral health measures will be fully incorporated into a pre-existing Oral Health Surveillance System and draw from Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant data system capacity, leveraging new resources to quantify need, address impact, and build a solid evidence base for the selected oral health interventions. Surveillance and evaluation will focus on timely, accurate reporting to key stakeholders, allowing data to drive program decisions and guide policy. By increasing efforts around perinatal and infant oral health through the Perinatal and Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Expansion Grant Program, the VDH DHP aims to increase care utilization and referral while decreasing disparities for at-risk perinatal and infant populations while ensuring patient-centered care. These efforts will translate into better oral health for all Virginians, the DHP's overall goal.