

## **PROJECT ABSTRACT**

**Project Title:** Perinatal & Infant Oral Health Quality Improvement Intensive Community Outreach Project (PIOHQ/ICO)  
**Applicant Organization Name:** State of Connecticut Department of Social Services  
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**PROBLEM:** Preventable oral disease prevalence, particularly caries, among low-income/at-risk children is a serious concern in Connecticut. Thirty-one percent of Head Start children, 27% of kindergarten children and 41% of third graders experienced dental disease. These statistics demonstrate the need for Connecticut to focus on

early childhood oral disease prevention. Poverty and low economic status, lack of education, and racial background are some of the determinants associated with high rates of dental diseases such as early childhood caries. Unfortunately, oral health initiatives have not yet been fully incorporated into early childhood systems development. Further integration of oral health in these initiatives is essential if oral health is to gain parity within these systems to address early childhood issues in Connecticut.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** The goals of the PIOHQ/ICO project will be to: Provide a coordinated approach across Connecticut that addresses the comprehensive oral health needs of pregnant women and infants most at risk; Promote an environment that supports perinatal and infant/toddler oral health and seeks to eliminate oral health barriers and disparities; Improve the systems of oral health care in Connecticut through ongoing evaluation, including statewide data collection and analysis; and, Leverage available fiscal and other resources to maintain the ICO approach and evaluate its effectiveness. Project objectives are to: 1) Expand the current pilot project, now located in Norwich and Waterbury, to establish ICO access in 15 major city areas throughout Connecticut; 2) Develop statewide policy, procedures, and clinical standards of practice that support the vision and implementation of the ICO project; 3) Ensure all ICO project partners and service/oral and health care providers are aware of and trained in the PIOHQ/ICO approach; 4) Increase/facilitate access to oral health care for participating women and children; 5-6) Improve services and systems of oral health care for at-risk perinatal women and infants in Connecticut and on the national level; 7) Ensure that the project approach, activities and impact are sustained.

**METHODOLOGY:** Connecticut has opted to use a Promising Approach in its implementation of the proposed ICO project. The CT Dental Health Partnership (CTDHP) currently provides outreach to at-risk pregnant women and young children in Connecticut who are not in regular preventive oral health care through an existing, state-supported pilot project that serves women and children in two cities. This pilot, which works through medical providers as well as oral health providers, is based on the Trusted Person model and will be expanded statewide and has the potential for national replication. There have been few community-level efforts to integrate oral health services for pregnant woman and infants into the local health care delivery system, to our knowledge, other than the work of CTDHP. Through internal efforts of CTDHP and others, screening and/or referral of children under age 3 was included as a standard in Connecticut's Person Centered Medical Home system for Medicaid/CHIP. The project will use continuous quality improvement (CQI) data to improve the processes, outcomes and impact of the project, integral to informing both the CQI plan and the evaluation. It has a strong and extensive data collection, analysis and project evaluation plan which will be used to measure impact and drive change both internally and externally. The ICO project is designed to capitalize and build on the current services available within the system of care in Connecticut as a whole, and the PIOHQ/ICO data collection and analysis process will build on systems already established by CTDHP. We are requesting \$200,000 in year 1 to support project coordination and clinical staffing costs, materials, and evaluation activities.

**COORDINATION:** An Implementation Team of experts has been recruited to oversee the PIOHQI plan and its achievements. An Administration Team will oversee the Administrative Plan, and we have selected CT Voices for Children as the project's Data/Evaluation Lead. CQI activities will be performed by CTDHP staff experienced in this process. We will enthusiastically participate in the state-national learning network that starts in the second year of the plan.

**EVALUATION:** The PIOHQ/ICO data collection and analysis process will build on the systems established by CTDHP five years ago. we will generate process measures for the ongoing outreach activity. We have an existing measure in place for our already initiated primary care physician outreach model. The measure is based on targeting non-dental utilizers within medical homes Mary Alice Lee, Ph.D., Senior Policy Fellow with Connecticut Voices for Children, is the Data and Evaluation Lead for this proposal. Specific process, outcome and impact indicators have been established and will measure a variety of outcomes, including the reduction of the prevalence of early childhood caries among children at risk and reduction in the cost associated with dental care for mothers and infants.

**ANNOTATION:** The PIOHQ/ICO project's purpose is to Provide a coordinated approach across Connecticut that addresses the comprehensive oral health needs of pregnant women and infants most at risk, supporting an environment that seeks to eliminate oral health barriers and disparities. Lack of oral care during pregnancy and in infancy, poverty and low economic status, lack of education, and racial background are some of the determinants associated with high rates of dental diseases such as early childhood caries. Through PIOHQI Connecticut will expand its current pilot project, develop statewide policy, procedures, and clinical standards of practice that support the vision and implementation of the ICO project; increase and facilitate access to oral health care for participating women and their children' and ensure long term project sustainability.