

National Foundations Give \$250K to Help Increase Access to Oral Health Care in Florida

Florida has the worst oral health in the nation. CareQuest Institute and Delta Dental Community Care Foundation are funding dental workforce reform.

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, November 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, American

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Access to oral health care is essential to overall well-being, yet too many Floridians, particularly children and seniors, face significant barriers to getting the care they need.”

Trenae Simpson, Senior Director of Grants and Programs, CareQuest

Children’s Campaign proudly announced two grants to support increasing access to quality, affordable oral health care in Florida - a new \$75,000 grant from the [Delta Dental Community Care Foundation](#), the philanthropic arm of Delta Dental of California and affiliates, and a continuation \$175,000 grant from [CareQuest Institute for Oral Health](#)®.

Through these grants, American Children’s Campaign can continue its role in a statewide coalition to reform Florida’s Dental Practice Act to allow the licensing of dental therapists. The principal partners in the coalition, which has grown into Florida’s largest oral health advocacy initiative with more than 400 members, are Floridians for

Dental Access (FDLA) and Florida Dental Hygienists Association (FDHA).

As outlined in the grants, the coalition is pulling together previous fragmented efforts to improve oral health access focused on evidence-based workforce reform. The coalition speaks in unity for the priorities aligned with moving the needle in Florida.

Roy Miller, president of American Children’s Campaign, says the oral health initiative is blessed that national foundations understand the overwhelming pain and suffering associated with little or no access to oral health and the myths and fiction being spread by opponents to workforce advancements. “We view this as an opportunity to build on the Live Healthy vision and legacy of immediate past Senate president Kathleen Passidomo,” said Miller. “Tens of thousands of children, adults and seniors are suffering from physical health maladies with the root cause starting in untreated oral health afflictions.”

"Access to oral health care is essential to overall well-being, yet too many Floridians, particularly children and seniors, face significant barriers to getting the care they need," said Trenae

Simpson, Senior Director of Grants and Programs at CareQuest Institute. "The American Children's Campaign and its coalition are doing critical work to reshape Florida's oral health landscape by advocating for innovative, evidence-based solutions to expand access to care. We are proud to support their efforts, because everyone deserves a healthy start and a system of care that meets them where they are."

"At Delta Dental of California and affiliates, we are deeply committed to our purpose of improving health by providing access to quality care. Our relationship with American Children's Campaign through the Delta Dental Community Care Foundation drives our collective work forward, bringing vital oral health services to children and families in need," said Kenzie

Ferguson, vice president of foundation and corporate social responsibility for Delta Dental of California and affiliates. "By supporting this incredible organization, we're opening doors to brighter futures — because we know that health begins with a smile. Together, we're committed to nurturing healthier, happier communities and inspiring hope for generations to come."

Dental workforce reform is long overdue. Florida is the worst in the nation for the number of individuals living in designated dental health professional shortage areas, more than 7.1 million. More than 1,500 dentists are needed right now to remove current shortages. Since Florida is the fastest growing state in the nation, the access crisis deepens each day. "We will never catch up by only looking to dentists as the answer to filling the gaps," Miller added.

The suffering experienced by Floridians due to lack of access to basic dental care is enormous:

- "I live in Pensacola Florida and there are only two dentist offices that accept Medicaid. You end up waiting long periods of time to schedule appointments - which is really bad when you need to have work done on your teeth. To make matters worse, when I do have an appointment, it's not uncommon that I get there only to find out that the appointment has been canceled." - Necosia S., Escambia County
- "I have only 10 teeth left. They are all on my bottom jaw; they are broken at or near the gum line and completely rotted. I get infections at least once a month so I am constantly on



More Florida children use hospital emergency rooms for dental pain than any other state in the nation.

antibiotics. Dentists want 2500 to pull them, which I can't afford. I have no upper teeth and no dentures for upper teeth... I am a disabled paramedic currently on SSDI. I do have Medicare but they do not provide dental. Somehow I only qualify for a share of cost Medicaid and that share is almost as much as the dentist charges to begin with." – Shawn S., Brevard County

- "I've had an awful time getting my children into a dentist office. The one local to me books 6 months out and keeps rescheduling their appointments due to staff shortages or over scheduling. My oldest has mental health issues and has 17 cavities and still hasn't had any fillings. His appointment was just moved for a 3rd time.... I have to drive my younger kids an hour away to be seen. This is very hard on me financially. Especially since it's a trip for the exam, a trip for cleaning, and then separate trips for treatment. It's extremely exhausting and a financial strain." – Deanna C., Putnam County

About American Children's Campaign

At the state capitol and in communities across Florida, American Children's Campaign is the leading nonpartisan voice for children — no matter their race, ethnicity, gender identity or place of birth. We are experienced in building citizen-led community coalitions at local and state levels to initiate systemic reform for Florida's children through responsive public education campaigns and responsible public policy. We engage diverse citizens, stakeholders and experts in consensus-oriented dialogue, establish a policy framework with specific recommendations, and then take action while stressing accountability. Since 1992, American Children's Campaign has achieved numerous transformational policy-driven and operational changes that have improved the health, education and well-being of Florida's children. Our mission is to be the change for complex social problems through public education, advocacy and community activism.

Karen Bonsignori

American Children's Campaign

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