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Children, Seniors and Uninsured to See Better Oral Health Access Thanks to 2017 State Budget

Governor Snyder Signs Budget to Push Oral Health, Dental Care Funding Above \$200 Million Statewide

Lansing, Mich. – Seniors, children, adults enrolled in Medicaid, and low-income uninsured residents across Michigan will have better access than ever to dental and oral health services as a result of the Fiscal Year 2017 budget signed last week by Governor Rick Snyder. Every child in the state enrolled in Medicaid will have oral health access through Healthy Kids Dental beginning on October 1st, thanks to a \$69.7 million general fund investment. Statewide funding for Healthy Kids Dental and other oral health programs is now roughly \$250 million, total.

Additional oral health investments in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget include \$2.7 million to increase access for pregnant women who seek oral health services, an additional \$2 million in funding for the University of Detroit Mercy's Dental Clinic, and \$1.55 million in new funding for local health departments that partner with qualified, non-profit dental service providers to provide dental homes for seniors, children, adults enrolled in Medicaid, and low-income residents without dental insurance.

"The budget approved by Governor Snyder and the state legislature is great news for the children and pregnant women who struggle each year to access the critical oral health care they need," said Michele Strasz, MPA, Board President of the Michigan Oral Health Coalition. "Expanding access to care won't just lead to healthier smiles, it'll lead to healthier kids and families."

Poor oral health is closely linked to an increased risk for cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. The dangers of poor oral health are especially serious for pregnant

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women and their children, and have been associated with pre-term birth and low birth weight.

While poor oral health can occur across all age, ethnic, and income groups, some Michigan populations are at particular risk. According to studies:

- 55.3 percent of Michigan families earning less than \$20,000 annually had no preventative dental care in the last year.
- 51.9 percent of kids age 5 and under had no preventative dental care in the last year.
- Serious gaps exist in dental care access in ethnic minority communities. 37 percent of Hispanic adults and 45 percent of African-American adults received no preventative dental care in the last year, compared to only 29 percent of white residents.

“This year’s budget sends the message that policymakers take oral health seriously,” said Trish Roels, DDS, Chief Oral Health Officer with Cherry Health. “Residents across the state now have a better chance than ever to seek out the oral health care they need, for themselves, their children, and their elderly parents.”

Improving oral health is both a state and national priority, set forth by the U.S. Surgeon General, the Institute of Medicine, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Michigan Oral Health Coalition is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve oral health in Michigan. The Coalition is comprised of over 120 primary care clinicians, oral health clinicians, dental benefit providers, advocacy and provider organizations, state and local government officials, and patients.

For more information or to view the plan, visit www.mohc.org.