

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Michigan Oral Health Coalition Joins DentaQuest Foundation's Oral Health 2014 Initiative to Eliminate Oral Health Disparities**

*A local leader in community oral health*

**October 25, 2011** – The DentaQuest Foundation has selected Michigan Oral Health Coalition to join its Oral Health 2014 Initiative. Michigan Oral Health Coalition will receive \$100,000 and resources to support its work to tackle the lack of access to dental health services for the underserved in Michigan.

The Oral Health 2014 Initiative is a major step to launching a national movement to reverse profound oral health disparities in the United States. Michigan Oral Health Coalition joins non-profit partners in 19 states in this nationwide collaborative effort: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.

"This is a really important moment for oral health," said Ralph Fuccillo, president of the DentaQuest Foundation. "State organizations have a critical role in health improvements as advocates and stakeholders. Michigan Oral Health Coalition and the other Oral Health 2014 organizations enhance the national movement of collaborative leaders who are embracing the challenge and the opportunity to address oral health disparities in their communities."

"Now is the time for Michigan to maximize its public health infrastructure in a meaningful way," said Karlene Ketola, executive director of the Michigan Oral Health Coalition. "The State Legislature and Administration have shown their support of oral health by maintaining a comprehensive Medicaid adult dental benefit and expanding the Healthy Kids Dental program to four new counties. The Coalition and its partners are ready for the challenge."

Nearly 70 organizations expressed interest in the Oral Health 2014 initiative and its objectives. Thirty-six organizations were invited to submit full proposals.

According to a recent report from the Institute of Medicine, nearly 5 million children went without regular dental checkups in 2008 because of financial limitations, and 33.3 million Americans live in an area with a shortage of dental professionals. The multi-year Oral Health 2014 Initiative aims to eliminate such disparities by supporting state organizations that are building community partnerships.

Every proposal was reviewed to evaluate its fit with the selection criteria. A distinguished National Advisory Committee of leaders in community health, philanthropy, civic engagement, and members of the founding board of the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance provided guidance to the DentaQuest Foundation in the development of the program and the selection of grantees. They are:

- **Dr. Caswell Evans** of the University of Illinois, DentaQuest Foundation Board of Directors and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Paul Gilmer** of Triana Energy and a member of the National Community Committee of the CDC Prevention Research Centers
- **Dr. Leslie E. Grant** of the National Dental Association and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Marion Kane**, formerly of Barr Foundation and currently on the Board of the Directors for the DentaQuest Foundation
- **Dr. Dushanka Kleinman** of the University of Maryland School of Public Health and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Barbara Leonard** of the Maine Health Access Foundation
- **Sandra Owens Lawson** of CRP Corp.
- **Dr. Lindsey Robinson** of the California Dental Association Foundation and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors, and
- **Dr. Donna Shelley** of New York University School of Nursing and Dentistry.

#### **About the DentaQuest Foundation**

The DentaQuest Foundation ([dentaquestfoundation.org](http://dentaquestfoundation.org)) invests in national and community-based efforts to improve oral health for all through its support of prevention and access to oral health care, and through its partnerships with funders, policy makers, and community leaders. The DentaQuest Foundation is supported by DentaQuest, a leading oral health company, administering prevention-focused dental benefits to nearly 15 million individuals across the United States. DentaQuest is a partner in the community and committed to improving oral health through access, innovation and affordability.

#### **About the Michigan Oral Health Coalition**

Michigan Oral Health Coalition is a non-profit whose mission is to improve oral health in Michigan by focusing on prevention, health promotion, oral health data, access, and the link between oral health and overall health. With more than 125 members, the Coalition is comprised of primary care clinicians, oral health clinicians, dental benefit providers, advocacy and provider organizations, state and local government officials, and consumers working together to improve oral health in Michigan.

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