



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Dental health grant to benefit local children

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) is expected to receive a \$3.8 million grant to participate in the statewide Local Dental Pilot Project (LDPP) aimed at improving access to dental care for income-eligible children.

The pilot project will focus on children ages 0 to 12 years old who are at high risk of dental disease by providing case management and prevention-based services throughout the county. Efforts will be focused on children who are enrolled in Medi-Cal and children residing in tribal communities and remote geographic regions of the county.

The Department of Health Care Services received 23 proposals from across the state from entities competing for the \$150 million in funding. Humboldt County was one of 15 communities approved—the only rural county to receive funding on its own.

Leigh Pierre-Oetker, oral health consultant for DHHS's Public Health branch, said this will be hugely beneficial for the county, and will help combat the county's high rate of children with tooth decay.

"There is a lack of providers who take Denti-Cal," the dental version of Medi-Cal, "in Humboldt County which can make it tricky for families to maintain a consistent regimen with their children to get preventive dental services," Pierre-Oetker said. "Add barriers such as being rurally located, lack of transportation and poverty, and the challenges become greater."

DHHS has partnered with the following agencies on the LDPP: Redwood Community Action Agency (RCAA), K'ima:w Dental Clinic, Redwoods Rural Health Center, Open Door Community Health Centers, California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University and Humboldt Network of Family Resource Centers (FRC).

“This is a great opportunity for a rural county to demonstrate what can be achieved by building upon partnerships and working together to support oral health for children,” said Public Health Director Michele Stephens.

Over the next four years, DHHS and partner agencies will perform outreach, prevention and education using Women, Infant and Children Well Child Dental Visits, RCAA’s TOOTH education program in daycares, preschools and elementary schools, the FRC network and other community events.

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