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Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

## **Dental Assistance Program for Seniors Annual Report**

July 2005 – June 2006

Submitted to the Colorado Legislature  
by the Oral Health Program, Prevention Services Division  
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## Document Information

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## **Dental Assistance Program for Seniors Executive Summary**

**Purpose.** The Colorado General Assembly authorized the Dental Assistance Program for Seniors in the 2003 legislative session as House Bill 03-1346. This amended the statute, first initiated in 1977, to allow administration of the program through “Award Service Grants” to qualified grantees rather than direct payment of vouchers from dental providers due to implementation of the Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act (HIPAA). The purpose of the program is to provide dental and oral health services, including relief for pain and infection, oral cancer screening, dentures, denture maintenance and repair, and related dental services to eligible seniors in Colorado. Eligible seniors are those who are eligible for Old Age Pension assistance as defined in Section 26-2-111(2), C.R.S. The Oral Health Program in the Prevention Services Division at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment administers the program.

**Use of funds.** A total of \$554,876 was appropriated in fiscal year 2005-06 for implementation of the Dental Assistance Program for Seniors from general fund monies. The statute allows for 0.8 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) to administer the program.

In this fiscal year, \$427,892 was encumbered to qualified grantees. \$20,465 of this amount was not spent due to challenges in completing the treatment of some seniors by the end of the fiscal year. The administrative costs were \$36,519, which included costs related to convening the Dental Advisory Committee, training of grantees, technical assistance, and 0.8 FTE.

**Accomplishments.** For FY 2005-06, the qualified grantees included 8 senior-related organizations, 5 community health centers, and 4 private providers. During this time, 705 eligible seniors received dental services, compared to 691 in FY 2004-05, and 80% were able to pay a co-payment. Nearly all seniors receive an exam and x-rays, and the majority is in need of dentures/partial dentures and related services, consistent with what would be expected for a low-income elderly population.

The Dental Advisory Committee has met four times since it was created in 2003. The committee met most recently on 6/21/06 and recommended identifying private dental providers in region 13 as the Upper Arkansas Area Agency on Aging had decided it no longer wanted to administer the program due to the low administrative costs (10% allowed). In addition, the committee recommended a training workshop be held for the grantees to share experiences, understand the grants program guidelines, identify ways of verifying eligibility of the seniors, and marketing the program to seniors. This training is scheduled for FY 2007.

Finally, the Dental Advisory Committee recommended revisiting the fee schedule, as 75% of the maximum allowable fees are less than current Medicaid fees. This has resulted in a two-fold challenge, including attracting eligible grantees to apply for funds under the program, particularly private providers, and an inability to expend all of the funds, as dentists are unwilling to accept the reimbursement rate in many instances.

## **I. Administrative Report**

### **A. Amount of General Fund Monies Received**

The Dental Assistance Program for Seniors received \$554,876 from general fund monies for FY 2005-2006.

### **B. Program Description**

The Colorado General Assembly authorized the Dental Assistance Program for Seniors in the 2003 legislative session as House Bill 03-1346. This amended the statute, first initiated in 1977, to allow administration of the program through “Award Service Grants” to qualified grantees rather than direct payment of vouchers from dental providers due to implementation of the Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act (HIPAA). The purpose of the program is to provide dental and oral health services, including relief for pain and infection, oral cancer screening, dentures, denture maintenance and repair, and related dental services to eligible seniors in Colorado. Eligible seniors are those who are eligible for Old Age Pension assistance as defined in Section 26-2-111(2), C.R.S. The Oral Health Program in the Prevention Services Division at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment administers the program.

The Dental Assistance Program for Seniors provides needed dental services to low-income seniors in Colorado who otherwise would not have access to dental care as Medicaid does not have an adult dental benefit in Colorado except for emergency extractions, and Medicare does not cover dental services. Seniors with good oral health are more likely to have better overall health and quality of life.

In FY 2005-06, there were 17 qualified grantees, including 8 senior related organizations, including Area Agencies on Aging, 5 community health centers, and 4 private providers. Grantees were located in 11 of the 14 state planning management regions. Region 5 (East Central), Region 12 (North Central), and Region 10 (Southern portion of Western Slope) have not had grantees apply for the funding. A Governor-appointed Dental Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the department on qualified grantees and funding distribution.

### **C. Program Goals**

The overall goal of the program is to increase access to care for low-income seniors by offering grants to qualified grantees that assure, or provide directly, dental services to seniors in need. The programmatic goals in this year of implementation included:

- 1) Assuring sufficient grantees to ensure maximum expenditure of available funds;
- 2) Increasing the number of low-income seniors whose dental needs are met.

**D. Evaluation of the Operation of the Program**

For FY 2005-06, the qualified grantees included 8 senior related organizations, 5 community health centers, and 4 private providers, including:

- Northeast AAA\*
- Senior Answers and Services
- Marillac Clinic
- South Central Colorado Seniors
- Lower Arkansas Valley AAA
- Loveland Community Health Center
- Denver Health and Hospitals
- John Curtis, DDS
- Health District of Larimer County
- San Juan Basin AAA
- Prevention Plus, Inc.
- Pikes Peak AAA
- Upper Arkansas AAA
- Shelby Kahl, RDH
- Pueblo Community Health Center
- Huerfano/Las Animas Area COG
- David Nordstrom, DDS

(\* Area Agency on Aging)

Grantees submit reimbursement forms indicating the number of seniors receiving services, the types of dental procedures provided, and the number of seniors paying up to 20% co-payment. Grantees are allowed to keep 10% of their reimbursement for administration.

In FY 2005-06, 705 eligible seniors received dental services, compared to 691 in FY 2004-05, and 80% were able to pay a co-payment. The number of specific dental procedures provided is illustrated in the table below. Seniors may receive more than one procedure. Nearly all seniors receive an exam and x-rays, and the majority is in need of dentures/partial dentures and related services, consistent with what would be expected for a low-income elderly population.

FY	Seniors Served	Exam and x-rays	Cleanings	Fillings	Dentures & Partial	Denture repairs/relines	Extractions Emergency
2005	691	761	219	392	422	91	427
2006	705	738	230	384	381	78	245

**E. Dental Advisory Committee**

The Dental Advisory Committee has met four times since its was created in 2003. The first meeting of the committee was on November 3, 2003, in which the committee

reviewed the Request for Proposal to obtain the eligible grantees. The committee met subsequently on 8/31/04 to select the grantees upon review of the proposals, and on 5/25/05 to monitor progress of the grantees and make recommendations on funding for each of the grantees based on performance and number of eligible seniors in the region. The committee met most recently on 6/21/06 and recommended identifying private dental providers in region 13 as the Upper Arkansas Area Agency on Aging had decided it no longer wanted to administer the program due to the low administrative costs (10% allowed). Minutes of the meetings of the Dental Advisory Committee are available on the Oral Health Program website <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/oralhealth/OAP.html>

In addition, the committee recommended a training workshop be held for the grantees to share experiences, understand the grants program guidelines, identify ways of verifying eligibility of the seniors, and marketing the program to seniors. This training is scheduled for FY 2007.

#### **F. Costs Incurred by the Program**

A total of \$554,876 was appropriated in fiscal year 2005-06 for implementation of the Dental Assistance Program for Seniors from general fund monies. The statute allows for 0.8 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) to administer the program.

In this fiscal year, \$427,892 was encumbered to qualified grantees. \$20,465 of this amount was not spent due to challenges in completing the treatment of some seniors by the end of the fiscal year. The administrative costs were \$36,519, which included costs related to convening the Dental Advisory Committee, training of grantees, technical assistance, and 0.8 FTE.

#### **F. Areas for Development**

The Dental Advisory Committee recommended revisiting the fee schedule, as 75% of the maximum allowable fees are less than current Medicaid fees. This has resulted in a two-fold challenge, including attracting eligible grantees to apply for funds under the program, particularly private providers, and an inability to expend all of the funds, as dentists are unwilling to accept the reimbursement rate in many instances. The Oral Health Program is gathering other safety net fee schedules for comparison so that recommendations may be made. The Dental Advisory Committee recommended that the specific procedures and fees be removed from statute, allowing the committee to make those decisions with approval by the State Board of Health.