DentaQuest Foundation Grants Nearly $100,000 to Tennessee Primary Care Association to Improve Oral Health in the State

TPCA will work to increase awareness and further improvement of oral health in partnership with physicians, lawmakers

Nashville, Tenn. – Aug. 27, 2013 – The DentaQuest Foundation recently welcomed the Tennessee Primary Care Association (TPCA) into its growing, national network of state primary care associations that are helping to improve access to quality oral health care. TPCA, which received a one-year grant of $99,648 as part of the Foundation’s Strengthening the Oral Health Safety Net Initiative, will work in support of improving Tennesseans’ oral health by creating a new program within TPCA.

TPCA’s community health center members form the core of Tennessee’s health safety net, serving more than 384,000 patients in 2012, including the uninsured, underinsured, and those with private insurance across the state. However, not all health centers have the capacity to provide dental care, leaving thousands of patients without access to dental services. While tooth decay can have a devastating impact on children and families, it is nearly 100 percent preventable with education, regular check-ups for prevention, and treatment.

“We’re proud to partner with TPCA in working to strengthen Tennessee’s community health centers and their important role in meeting the oral health care needs of children and families throughout the state,” said Ralph Fuccillo, president of the DentaQuest Foundation. “With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2014, nearly every child in the U.S. will have access to dental care, many for the first time. We are committed to strengthening the oral health safety net so that it is prepared to handle the volume of new individuals seeking care. The Strengthening the Oral Safety Net Initiative is an investment in the preservation and growth of existing and new programs for a stronger safety net.”

A new oral health coordinator will lead TPCA’s oral health program, convening dental and primary care providers from community health centers into a new dental workgroup focused on increasing oral health expertise and capacity across Tennessee. With the support of the DentaQuest Foundation, TPCA will promote the importance of oral health by facilitating greater collaboration between dental and medical programs, strengthening existing dental quality measures, and elevating policy discussions on oral health matters within the state legislature.

“Oral health is a critical but, unfortunately, often overlooked component of overall health. Now, with this support from the DentaQuest Foundation, we’re able to dedicate resources and energy to studying the coordination and delivery of oral health services in our communities,” said TPCA CEO Kathy Wood-Dobbins. “We look forward to advancing oral health care in Tennessee by fostering collaboration between primary care providers and dentists and reaching out to policymakers.”

- more -
TPCA will also select five member community health centers to receive in-kind direct technical assistance for practice improvement from the DentaQuest Institute’s Safety Net Solutions team. These centers will gain valuable best practices in increasing access for patients, improving quality and streamlining operations, achieving a financially sustainable model. The DentaQuest Institute is a non-profit organization affiliated with the DentaQuest Foundation.

The DentaQuest Foundation chose TPCA to join its national Strengthening the Oral Health Safety Net Initiative after a competitive request for proposals process. Through the Initiative, the Foundation is working to increase oral health expertise and capacity of the oral health safety net at the national, state and community levels so they are prepared to care for the growing numbers of people seeking care.

TPCA is one of four state primary care associations to receive support from the DentaQuest Foundation in 2013, joining 10 others that are currently working to expand the capacity of safety net dental programs across the country. The initial grant award provides TPCA funding for one year, with the option to request renewal funding for up to two additional years.

The DentaQuest Foundation’s national Initiative supports community health centers in more than 8,000 communities where approximately 23 million patients receive preventive and primary care. Such patients often have limited access to care due to lack of insurance, or financial, geographic, language, cultural and other barriers. The National Association of Community Health Centers, the National Network for Oral Health Access, and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers are national partners in this Initiative.

**About the DentaQuest Foundation**

The DentaQuest Foundation is the nation’s leading philanthropy focused solely on oral health. The DentaQuest Foundation 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 a nonprofit affiliate of DentaQuest, a leading oral health company administering prevention-focused dental benefits to more than 18 million individuals across the United States. Learn more at [www.dentaquestfoundation.org](http://www.dentaquestfoundation.org).

**About the DentaQuest Institute**

The DentaQuest Institute is a not-for-profit organization focused on efficiency, effectiveness and quality in dental care. The DentaQuest Institute’s Safety Net Solutions program is a practice management technical assistance program that supports safety net dental programs to overcome financial and operational challenges and provide sustainable access to care for those in need. Since the program began in 2006, the DentaQuest Institute’s Safety Net Solutions program has worked with 285 safety net dental programs in 28 states. In addition, the Institute works with clinical partners across the United States to develop and implement more effective approaches to preventing and managing oral diseases. Learn more at [www.dentaquestinstitute.org](http://www.dentaquestinstitute.org).

**About the Tennessee Primary Care Association**

The Tennessee Primary Care Association improves access to primary health care through leadership, advocacy, and support, as the voice of community health centers. TPCA’s membership is comprised of more than 30 non-profit primary care clinics operating more than 200 satellite sites that provide high-quality, comprehensive primary care to people across the state. Member health centers served more than 384,000 Tennesseans in 2012 and continue to see their patient numbers grow. Learn more at [www.tnpca.org](http://www.tnpca.org).

# # #