

Oral Health Task Force Receives Important Grants

February 11, 2020 – The Oral Health Task Force (OHTF), a program of the North Shore Health Care Foundation (NSHCF), has recently secured three significant grants to continue its mission to provide greater access to and address gaps in oral health care for the children of Cook County and the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Task Force received funding from:

- Cook County Public Health & Human Services Community Funding - \$10,000
- Lloyd K Johnson Foundation - \$10,000
- Medica Foundation - \$15,000 of a total \$25,000 multi-year grant

“We are so relieved to have been successful in our applications to secure this grant funding and are grateful to these organizations for recognizing the critical need for children’s oral health care,” said Paul Nelson, OHTF Chair and NSHCF Board Member. “Thanks to key partners like these, the Oral Health Task Force can continue this critical work which we know is working; we’ve seen an increase in program usage and a continual reduction in decay and cavities in children locally. For example, the percentage of students with cavities at Cook County ISD 166 has dropped from 26% in 2014 when we started doing screenings to 9% in 2019. Grand Portage’s Oshki Ogimaag Charter School saw a 13% reduction from the first year of working with the Oral Health Task Force in 2018 compared to 2019.”

The Oral Health Task Force has helped over 800 children, youth and pregnant moms with dental care locally because of the collaborative way we are addressing oral health here in Cook County. Having healthy teeth is an integral part of children's overall health and well-being. Early preventive care such as screenings and sealants can keep teeth healthy and reduce the need for expensive restorative care later. Although tooth decay is almost completely preventable, it is the most common childhood disease. Studies show links between ear and sinus infections, weakened immune systems, diabetes and other serious illnesses. Lack of dental care can affect children's speech, nutrition, growth and development. Over 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illness.

The funding received will help the OHTF complete annual screenings through all local schools and other organizations, fluoride treatments and will help support a generous sliding fee scale program to cover children prenatal to 26 years of age with other dental care needs not covered by other programs. The OHTF employs an Oral Health Educator/Hygienist and works with Grand Marais Family Dentistry and the Sawtooth Mountain Clinic for care provision.

More information about the OHTF is available at NorthShoreHealthCareFoundation.org or by calling 218-387-2334.

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