



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Doug Hogan
502-564-7042, ext. 3467

Beth Fisher
502-564-6786, ext.3101

Oral Health: A Key Component for Kentuckians' Overall Health

52 Weeks of Public Health Campaign Spotlight: Kentucky Oral Health Program

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 13, 2017) – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is honoring the Kentucky Oral Health Program in recognition of National Dental Hygiene Month.

The Oral Health Program consists of 11 public health dental hygiene teams providing services in 28 Kentucky counties. These teams visit local schools to assess, clean and apply fluoride varnish and sealants to a child's molars. The fluoride varnish provides protectants for six months, and the sealants protect the chewing surface for the length of the sealant, which typically protects the surface of the teeth from decay. With a deficit of dental providers in some of Kentucky's rural communities, this program fulfills a vital need with a mission to refer every child to a local dentist.

"We are working not only with our heads and hands, but with our hearts. We have been touched by all of the children and unreal circumstances we come across," said Dr. Julie

McKee, DMD, director of the DPH Oral Health Program. “Our work is helping children in Kentucky - but also changing each of us for the better.”

The public health dental hygiene teams have served approximately 25,000 Kentucky children providing 175,000 preventive dental services including oral hygiene instruction, dental risk assessment, patient education, nutrition counseling, tobacco counseling, varnish and sealants. These individuals embrace the needs of local communities to assure children can grow and learn without the distraction of poor dental health. If a child is in pain or cannot eat due to poor dental health, they cannot learn and grown to become healthy, productive Kentucky citizens.

On Saturday, Oct. 7, the Oral Health Program was recognized at the [Kentucky Dental Hygienists' Association](#) Public Health Symposium for being a trailblazer in the area of public dental health. The event was a continuing education that consisted of a panel discussion centered on the important work health department hygienists do within Kentucky communities. (Please see the attached photo of members receiving the award).

Background on the DPH Oral Health Program

The Kentucky Oral Health Program works with local health departments, dental hygienists, health educators and dentists throughout the state to educate Kentuckians about the importance of oral health and its link to one’s overall health. When Kentucky established an oral health program in 1928, it was the third state in the country to have a public dental health program. One of the program’s major efforts is water fluoridation. In 1951, the city of Maysville become the first Kentucky community to fluoridate its water supply. Today, Kentucky is a national leader with 96% of citizens having a fluoridated water.

Information for Attached Photo

From Left to Right: Kyle Isaacs, RDH (Session Lecturer); Christi Daugherty, RDH,(Public Health Dental Hygienist, Jessamine County); Stacy Trowbridge, RDH (Public Health Dental Hygienist, Barren River District Health Department); Babette Southard, RDH, MAH, BDH,(Former Administrator, DPH Public Health Hygiene

Program) Jennifer Nettles (Public Health Dental Hygienist, Purchase District), Dr. Julie Watts McKee (State Dental Director), Dr. Sharlee Burch (Session Lecturer); Mary Jones, RDH (President, Kentucky Dental Hygienists' Association).

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.

