Access to Dental Care

Many Ohioans who cannot receive dental care in the private sector rely on community dental programs known as the Dental Care Safety Net. The Oral Health Program (OHP) serves as a resource to these programs by offering the following:

**Safety Net Dental Care Programs**

Safety net dental care programs provide dental care to people on Medicaid and offer sliding fees, reduced fees or free care to patients who don’t have dental insurance or can’t afford to pay a private dentist. The dental “safety net” includes public dental clinics, dental care provided to schoolchildren and mobile/portable dental care programs (e.g., mobile dental vans). These programs provide basic dental care such as exams, X-rays, fillings, extractions, root canals and dentures.

The OHP maintains information on safety net dental programs in Ohio, including a map, list and brochure. All information is published on the OHP Web site at the address noted at the bottom of page 2.

**Assist Safety Net Dental Care Programs in Recruiting Dental Care Professionals**

Dentists and dental hygienists may qualify for loan repayment for their professional training by working in dental safety net clinics. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) makes potentially eligible dentists, dental hygienists and dental/dental hygiene students aware of state and federal loan repayment programs that are available to them. In addition, ODH administers the Ohio Dentist and Ohio Dental Hygienist Loan Repayment Programs.

ODH also assists local communities in applying for federal designations as dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), which may be necessary for a clinic or dental office to be an eligible worksite for a provider to receive loan repayment.

Dental professionals interested in loan repayment or communities wishing to apply for a dental HPSA should contact the Primary Care Office at PCRH@odh.ohio.gov.
Funding and Technical Assistance for Safety Net Dental Care Programs

ODH provides funding to several of Ohio’s dental safety net clinics to help offset the cost of uncompensated care.

Funding supports diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic services for Ohioans who have low incomes and who are uninsured for dental care.

The OHP conducts periodic comprehensive site reviews of safety net grant subrecipients and provides technical assistance to agencies interested in starting new or improving operations of existing safety net dental clinics.

Dental OPTIONS

OPTIONS, the Ohio Partnership To Improve Oral health through access to Needed Services, is a case management program that links eligible people with dentists who have volunteered either to donate care or provide care for reduced fees. OPTIONS is a partnership between ODH and the Ohio Dental Association. The OHP administers OPTIONS and provides funding for lab work.

Before treatment

After treatment

Online Information for Safety Net Dental Care Programs

The OHP maintains information specific to Ohio’s safety net dental clinics on the ODH website that features a large array of tools useful to Ohio's dental clinics.

Supporting Public Policy Development

The OHP works to support efforts to include oral health as an essential component of health within the ODH and with many outside agencies and organizations. For example, OHP is represented on Oral Health Ohio, a broad-based organization that advocates and educates to improve oral health for all Ohioans.