

Washington Dental Service Foundation

Community Advocates for Oral Health

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Nathan Johnson
Senior Policy Advisor
Washington Health Care Authority

Dear Nathan,

The Washington Dental Service Foundation (WDS Foundation) is encouraged by the breadth of innovative Medicaid Waiver Transformation Project proposals seeking to address oral health as a part of whole person care. This reflects a recognition across Washington State, that including oral health in plans to transform our healthcare system is essential to achieving whole person care and the Triple Aim.

The goals of the Global Waiver and Healthier Washington Goals (reducing avoidable use of intensive services, improving population health on specific measures, accelerating the transition to value-based purchasing, and constraining Medicaid cost growth) all have significant oral health opportunities associated with them. The number of transformation project proposals with an oral health component, submitted from across the State, reinforces this point.

WDS Foundation is supportive of the following Transformation Project proposals/concepts and is committed to working with interested parties to explore partnering opportunities:

- **Integration in Primary Care:** There are a number of proposals seeking to advance integrated, whole person care in the primary care setting. Efforts to create more advanced primary care models could benefit significantly from medical/dental integration tools, resources, and expertise that have been developed and tested nationally. This includes 4 Washington state primary care practices which have successfully integrated oral health into preventive care visits for pregnant women and people with diabetes.

WDS Foundation will be a strong and committed partner to the State in implementing the recently published [medical dental integration framework \(Oral Health: An Essential Component of Primary Care\)](#) and the associated implementation toolkit which will be available in September of 2016.

This framework supports scaling, spreading, and sustaining of a care delivery model across the State that would integrate systems of care and supports to address whole person health. This medical-dental integration framework is *designed to build providers capabilities to succeed and effectively operate in a transformed system and support work flow redesign to optimally meet the needs of patients.*

An example of this would be the delivery of evidence based pediatric oral health preventive services

during well child visits, and connecting children needing care to dental providers. The supporting evidence for pediatric oral health services delivered in primary care is so strong that there is already a metric for these preventive services in the State's Common Measure Set. WDS Foundation proposes partnering with the State to expand this successful model and reach more children through this avenue.

We would appreciate an opportunity to work with the appropriate staff to include this framework and toolkit in the Practice Transformation Hub envisioned in the Healthier Washington plan. We can provide the expertise, funding and support required to build health system capacity to execute the framework.

- **Care Coordination for people with chronic diseases & high utilizers of care:** A number of transformation proposals seek to address the need for coordinated care, particularly for people with chronic diseases and high utilizers of care. Including oral health in these proposals will reduce the oral disease burden impacting the health of patients, particularly those with diabetes and heart disease where evidence is mounting that there may be savings on the medical side for providing appropriate, evidence based dental care.
- **Healthy Moms, Healthy Mouths, Healthy Babies:** This Waiver Project Proposal will increase care coordination between medical and dental, and expand the dental provider network that can serve this population. The successful Access to Baby & Child Dentistry program is established in every county in WA State, and could be expanded to include referrals to dental for pregnant women, accompanied by expanded fees for dentists. There is a similar proposal to include people with diabetes in this strategy.
- **Dental Emergencies Needing Treatment (DENT):** A proven model for significantly reducing dental in the ER. This is an area ripe for better care and reducing system costs. This effort could benefit from several projects around the state that are attempting to address this costly problem (DENT in Spokane, Swedish in Seattle, an integrated referral strategy in Whatcom) as well as looking to whole person care delivery strategies as a way to spot disease before it requires an ER visit and engaging Community Health Workers to change care seeking behavior for dental issues.
- **Community Health Workers (CHWs) as care extenders and coordinators:** CHWs are going to be an important ingredient in health transformation, and there were several Transformation Project proposals concerning CHWs, which also included oral health. WDS Foundation is prepared to help ensure this workforce is able to provide oral health prevention and connection to care. We have trained CHWs working with seniors, patients with diabetes, and those who provide information and referrals to pregnant women and mothers of young children. We could provide this type of training (in multiple languages), educational resources, and anything else that would be helpful to CHWs, including those who work in supportive housing initiatives and Community Health Representatives (CHR) who work with Tribes.

- **Expansion of School Based Health Centers** was proposed in at least two Waiver Projects submitted. Reaching outside the traditional healthcare delivery system, school based health centers effectively and efficiently deliver consistent, high quality health services to children and adolescents, in particularly to young people who may have trouble accessing care elsewhere. School based health centers are an important bridge between health and education, delivering results that matter to schools – including decreases in absenteeism and improvements in grade point averages (Journal of Adolescent Health, 2009). WDS Foundation is interested in working with the state’s 40 school based health centers to equip them to address oral health and has started to work with a few of these health centers to pilot strategies.
- **Sealant & Sealant Surveillance programs** have been shown to reduce decay by more than 70 percent and are most cost-effective when provided to children who are at highest risk for tooth decay. The average cost of sealing one molar is less than one-third the cost of filling a cavity. School sealant programs are an effective way to increase access to preventive dental care and provide sealants to large numbers of children at risk for tooth decay. The Centers for Disease Control recommends school sealant programs as an evidence based public health intervention and WDS Foundation is interested in supporting the expansion of these services in schools and in developing a statewide monitoring system to ensure the delivery of high quality services to the students who would benefit the most and track impact. WDS foundation will support Waiver Project Proposals that seek to expand Sealant programs.

Clearly the health transformation we all envision for Washington State must emphasize prevention and address whole person care, which includes oral health. Many of the ideas listed here are already underway in Washington State, and reflected in several Waiver Project proposals. There is a great opportunity to build on their success and we are hopeful the negotiation process will result in waiver projects that are sufficiently flexible to enable the inclusion of oral health, even when not primarily focused on dental care (e.g. CHWs, Care Coordination, Care Integration, etc.).

Thank you for inviting WDS Foundation to share our ideas for fully integrating oral health into the work to achieve the “Triple Aim”. We are excited about the potential and stand ready to work with your team and others around the state.

Sincerely,



Diane Oakes
President and CEO
Washington Dental Service Foundation

Cc:
Bob Crittenden
Dorothy Teeter
John Weisman