

STATE OF COLORADO



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of Public Health
and Environment

Dental Loan Repayment Program Annual Report

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Dental Loan Repayment Program Executive Summary

Purpose. The Dental Loan Repayment Program was authorized by the Colorado General Assembly in the 2001 legislative session as Senate Bill 01-164. The purpose of the legislation was to create a “loan repayment program as an incentive to dental professionals to provide dental services to underserved populations.” The program pays all or part of the principal, interest and related expenses of the educational loan of each eligible dental professional and is open to both dentists and dental hygienists. This was one of nine recommendations submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by the Colorado Commission on Children’s Dental Health in December 2000. The Commission, in recognition of the shortage of dental providers willing to serve low-income populations, recommended offering educational loan repayments and other incentives to recent dental graduates to encourage the retention of current providers and the success in recruitment of new providers.

Use of funds. A total of \$199,612 was appropriated for implementation of the Dental Loan Repayment Program from the tobacco settlement monies in FY 2005-06. Of this amount, \$199,612 was expended, with \$189,968 awarded in loan repayments. All funds appropriated for fiscal year 2005-2006 were expended.

Eleven new dental providers participated in the program during this fiscal year, in addition to 14 continuing providers, bringing the total number of providers participating since the program’s inception to 39. The counties with participating providers include: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Cheyenne, Denver, Fremont, Larimer, Mesa, Montrose, Phillips, Pueblo, Weld, and Yuma.

Accomplishments. The total number of underserved patients served by the providers participating in the Dental Loan Repayment Program to date is 82,412, with 27,582 served in FY 2005-06. This fiscal year total includes 17,664 Medicaid-eligible children; 2,185 Child Health Plan Plus children; 7,488 uninsured adults and children; and 245 Old Age Pension recipients.

The program has become very competitive, with 19 applications received for this fiscal year. Applications included 17 dentists and 2 hygienists from 10 counties. Priority was given to returning applicants, followed by Dentist Provider Level I applicants serving more than the required 40 underserved patients per month and practicing in diverse geographic areas.

The Dental Loan Repayment Program partnered with the Colorado Rural Health Center to provide partial loan repayment to a rural dentist in Yuma, Colorado. The Colorado Rural Health Center, through a grant from The Colorado Trust, provided \$7,060 to the Level II Dentist directly through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Dental Loan Repayment Program.

The National Conference of State Legislatures highlighted the Colorado Dental Loan Repayment Program in “State Experience with Dental Loan Repayment Programs,” released in 2005. The report may be accessed at www.ncsl.org/programs/health/forum/dentalloan.htm. The report found that “although state experience with loan repayment programs is relatively new and the programs still are operating on a small scale, the examples highlighted in this report suggest that loan repayment is cost effective, is increasing the number of providers in underserved areas, and is enhancing access to oral health in those communities.”

I. Administrative Report

A. Amount of Tobacco Settlement Monies Received

The Dental Loan Repayment Program received \$199,612 from tobacco settlement monies for FY 2005-2006.

B. Program Description

The Dental Loan Repayment Program was authorized by the Colorado General Assembly in the 2001 legislative session as Senate Bill 01-164. The purpose of the legislation was to create a “loan repayment program as an incentive to dental professionals to provide dental services to underserved populations.” The program pays all or part of the principal, interest and related expenses of the educational loan of each eligible dental professional and is open to both dentists and dental hygienists. The program is administered by the Oral Health Program in the Prevention Services Division at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

The Dental Loan Repayment Program is a direct result of recommendations to the Governor and the Colorado General Assembly from the Colorado Commission on Children’s Dental Health in December 2000. The Commission identified loan repayment as a key strategy for addressing the shortage of dental providers willing to serve underserved populations in Colorado and for overcoming the significant dental education indebtedness. As a result of this recommendation, Senate Bill 01-164 was passed, creating the state Dental Loan Repayment Program.

In FY 2005-06, providers include 15 Level I dentists (40 patients/month), 3 Level II dentists (20 patients/month), 1 Level III dentist (10 patients/month), 5 Level I hygienists (20 patients/month), and 1 Level II hygienist (10 patients/month). In total, of the 25 dental providers currently participating, 17 are employed by community health centers and eight are in private practice.

C. Program Goals

The overall goal of the program is to increase access to care for low-income and underserved populations by offering financial incentives to dental providers to work in dental practices open to these populations. The programmatic goals in this year of implementation included:

- 1) Assuring sufficient applications to ensure maximum expenditure of available funds;
- 2) Collaborating with key stakeholders to market the program to current licensed providers and students; and
- 3) Increasing the number of persons from underserved populations whose dental needs are met.

D. Evaluation of the Operation of the Program

Appendix A illustrates the distribution of the providers to date. For FY 2005-06, the participating dentists include 15 Level I providers, who provide dental services to at least 40 underserved patients per month or devote at least 30 percent of a full-time dental practice to providing services to underserved populations. Ten dentists practice in nine public/private non-profit clinics, including:

- Inner City Health Center
- Pueblo Community Health Center
- High Plains Community Health Center
- Montrose Community Dental Clinic
- Health District of Northern Larimer County
- Salud Family Health Center
- Peak Vista Community Health Center
- Dental Aid of Boulder
- Marillac Clinic

The other five Level I dentists are in private practice in Adams, Arapahoe, Eagle, and Phillips counties. There are also three Level II private practice dentists in Adams, Jefferson, and Yuma counties. There is one Level III dentist in Cheyenne County. The six participating dental hygienists include five Level I providers, providing dental services to at least 20 underserved patients per month. Four are employed by community health centers in El Paso, Logan, Prowers and Weld counties, and one is in private practice in Fremont county. The remaining Level II hygienist, serving at least 10 underserved patients a month, is in an independent dental hygiene practice in Pueblo County. The Dental Loan Repayment Program is providing support to dental professionals working in “safety net” dental clinics, primarily, with minimal participation by private practice professionals. This is due, in part, to the need to serve as many underserved people as possible and the overall budget of the program.

Contracts were initiated with dental providers in two cycles in July 2005 and January 2006. Contracts reflected loan repayment levels corresponding with the dental professional’s level of service. The loan repayment checks were payable to both the dental professional and the loan company to assure repayment of educational loans was made. Participating providers are required to submit documentation from their loan companies indicating the appropriate decrease in balance on their educational loans. The terms of the new contracts are from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2007, and from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2008, respectively, reflecting the two-year agreement to serve underserved populations.

In addition, quarterly reports of the number of underserved people seen for dental care are requested to verify that the dental professionals are meeting the goals of the program. Quarterly reports are reviewed for completeness and accuracy. For non-“safety net” providers, verification from Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus is requested for review to substantiate the quarterly reports. All providers have been in compliance to date. As the following table illustrates, the majority of patients served are non-insured, followed by Medicaid. A total of 82,412 underserved patients have benefited from this program since its inception.

| | Medicaid | Child Health Plan Plus | Sliding Fee Patients | Old Age Pension | Total |
|---------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| FY 2002-03 | 3,629 | 802 | 10,359 | 202 | 14,992 |
| FY 2003-04 | 6,807 | 1,399 | 11,844 | 478 | 20,528 |
| FY 2004-05 | 8,734 | 873 | 9,606 | 97 | 19,310 |
| FY 2005-06 | 17,664 | 2,185 | 7,488 | 245 | 27,582 |
| Totals | 36,834 | 5,259 | 39,297 | 1,022 | 82,412 |

Based on the recommendations of the audit conducted by the State Auditor’s Office in 2004, all recommendations have been implemented, including clarification of prioritization criteria, verification of patients served, and marketing of the program. In addition, rules promulgated by the State Board of Health are also posted on the program’s webpage <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/oralhealth/DentLoan.html>

E. Costs Incurred by the Program

A total of \$199,612 was appropriated in fiscal year 2005-06 for implementation of the Dental Loan Repayment Program from tobacco settlement monies. The statute allows for 20 percent administrative expenditures and 0.2 full-time equivalent employees (FTE).

In this fiscal year, \$199,612 was expended with \$189,968 awarded in loan repayments. The administrative costs, \$9,644, were below the 20 percent allowed. Included in the administrative costs are the “oversight” costs, shared by all the tobacco-funded programs, which amounted to \$104 for this program.

The statute also allows the Oral Health Program to seek opportunities for additional funding from other federal and private funding sources. The Dental Loan Repayment Program partnered with the Colorado Rural Health Center to provide partial loan repayment to a rural dentist in Yuma, Colorado. The Colorado Rural Health Center, through a grant from The Colorado Trust, provided \$7,060 to the Level II Dentist directly through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Dental Loan Repayment Program.

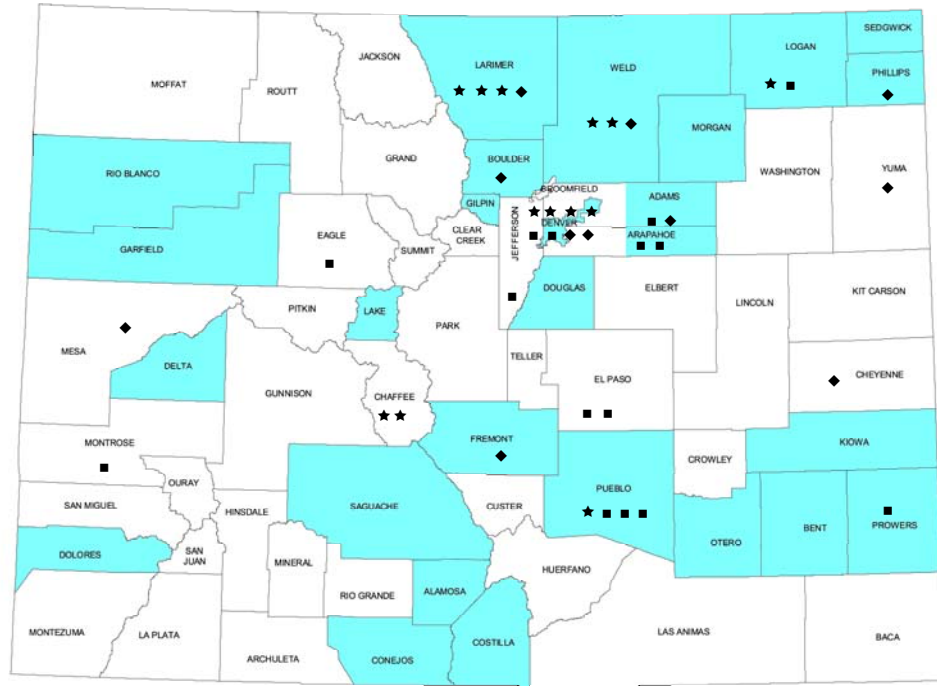
F. Areas for Development

The Dental Loan Repayment Program will continue to seek new venues for marketing the program to private providers to increase participation. This will meet the goal of assuring geographic distribution of funds and assure underserved populations have access to care. Due to the number of applications received by the program, additional funding has been sought from the Bureau of Health Professions’ “Grants to States to Support Oral Health Workforce Activities” to support additional dental providers with loan repayment.

Appendix A

Dental Loan Repayment Program

Revised 10/27/06



■ Designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas

Total Participants to Date - 39

★ Previous DLRP Participants

◆ New DLRP Participants FY06

■ Current DLRP Participants