



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Delta Dental of Kentucky Funds Western Regional Oral Health Coalition With \$200,000 Grant**

*Delta Dental of Kentucky and local health groups to provide oral health solutions to children in western Kentucky*

**LOUISVILLE, Ky.** (April 16, 2018) – A grant from Delta Dental of Kentucky will help improve oral health among children throughout western Kentucky. Delta Dental of Kentucky, through a partnership with Kentucky Youth Advocates, developed the Western Regional Oral Health Coalition, which is led by Dr. Laura Hancock Jones, and supported by the Barren River District Health Department. The coalition will help improve oral health outcomes in children, by training and educating regional dental providers, increasing the use of teledentistry, and investing in dental care for uninsured children.

This program is the result of state research findings published in the *Making Smiles Happen™: 2016 Oral Health Study of Kentucky's Youth*. Based on these findings, Delta Dental of Kentucky expanded its commitment to oral health across the state and provided \$1 million to launch five regional networks to develop oral health solutions across the state. Delta Dental of Kentucky partnered with Kentucky Youth Advocates to develop the five regional networks.

Throughout western Kentucky, it was found that 11,700 children had untreated tooth decay. The Western Kentucky Regional Oral Health Coalition was created to help improve the oral health of children in western Kentucky and reduce the need for urgent dental care. The program will accomplish its goals through a new subsidized Health

Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant software, educational opportunities for regional providers, and a grant to fund preventative care for uninsured children throughout the region.

“Delta Dental of Kentucky is thrilled to announce the creation of the Western Kentucky Regional Oral Health Coalition, a program that will impact the dental health of so many kids throughout western Kentucky.” Delta Dental of Kentucky CEO Jude Thompson said. “We believe that the implementation of these regional programs will drive the action necessary to improve the oral health of Kentucky’s children. We are proud to help fund these wonderful programs, which will have a lasting impact on children statewide.”

The Western Kentucky Regional Oral Health Coalition plans to reduce urgent dental needs and increase the number of preventative services by 10 percent during the 2018-2019 school year. A cloud based electronic health record system and Mouthwatch intraoral cameras will be utilized for better management and coordination among oral health care providers. The software will assist in increasing case management success and will improve the ability to communicate oral health needs. Additionally, the program intends to develop funding for school-based dental programs, private dentists and other collaborative projects that will treat underinsured children in the region. These resources will improve access to care, create exposure to oral literacy, and provide preventative care solutions that will benefit the oral health of children in western Kentucky.

“Thanks to the vision and support of Delta Dental of Kentucky, we’re bringing innovative health solutions to patients in western Kentucky,” Dr. Laura Hancock Jones, facilitator of the Western Region Oral Health Coalition said. “We have an obligation to address the care needs of children identified at risk following the Making Smiles Happen Surveillance Project. We are optimistic that this project will improve upon the great work already happening to improve the smiles of the children and families in our region.”

Dr. Laura Hancock Jones currently practices with Union County Family Dental in Morganfield, Kentucky. She has experience in both private practice and public health settings as past Dental Public Health faculty for the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry Mobile Outreach Program based in Madisonville. She was previously awarded the honor of “2015 Kentucky Oral Health Champion” for her dedication to improving oral health across the state.

Additional partners that helped with the development of the Western Kentucky Regional Oral Health Coalition include the Purchase Area District Health Department, UK Dental Outreach, Health First Federally Qualified Health Center, Barren River District Health Department, Community Dental Clinic in Owensboro, Community Dental Care in Madisonville, and private dental offices throughout western Kentucky.

The Western Kentucky Regional Oral Health Coalition is one of four Kentucky programs developed through the partnership between Delta Dental of Kentucky and the Kentucky Youth Advocates.

The full scope of work for each region's project, along with video, is now available at <http://www.kentuckyoralhealth.com/>.

**About Delta Dental of Kentucky and Making Smiles Happen®**

Delta Dental of Kentucky is a not-for-profit company that is committed to bright smiles and healthy lifestyles for its 700,000 enrollees and the communities we serve. Delta Dental of Kentucky is part of a family of companies that collectively are among the largest, most experienced dental plan administrators in the nation. Our network of providers gives our customers access to high-quality, affordable dental care.

Making Smiles Happen® is Delta Dental of Kentucky's promise to serve our communities and residents one smile at a time. Aimed with the task of promoting oral health to the citizens of Kentucky, this initiative supports many non-profit partners. Giving back is a core component of our culture at Delta Dental, and Making Smiles Happen enables this support to be given to organizations that champion a better quality of life for citizens throughout our Commonwealth.

**About Kentucky Youth Advocates:**

Kentucky Youth Advocates believes all children deserve to have a safe and loving family, have access to quality education and health care, and have opportunities to help them thrive. As THE independent voice for Kentucky's children, we work to ensure policymakers create investments and policies that are good for children.

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