



SPURRING A CONVERSATION
ABOUT ORAL HEALTHCARE
FOR AGING IOWANS:

**LIFELONG
SMILES
COALITION**

THE CONTEXT THAT SET THE STAGE

Health is health. Oral and physical health can no longer be viewed as separate and distinct states with no mutual impact - science and medicine have proven otherwise. Moving this irrefutable knowledge into action - making meaningful changes in the way that oral and physical healthcare is delivered - is an immense enterprise. Yet, in recent years movement toward integrating healthcare - including oral and physical - is steadily gaining ground, with growing evidence that integrated care approaches lead to the Quadruple Aim (care, health, cost, and meaning in work).

Research also demonstrates that environmental factors and conditions, such as where we live, work, and play, impact our health in myriad ways. These social determinants of health create what are sometimes insurmountable access, systemic, and institutional barriers to ensuring health. Resulting health disparities - preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations - will never be alleviated without multi-factored changes across systems and sectors; changes which take decades to come to fruition.

In our society, there are deeply held beliefs about oral health in older adults, some of which are not accurate. It is no longer true, for example, that most older adults lose their teeth or that investing in extensive oral health treatment is unimportant at later stages of life. With no structural system in place for older or homebound Iowans to access care (i.e., no dental benefit in Medicare), these long-held beliefs have contributed to systemic inequality for this population.

It's one thing to recognize and understand these truths; the challenge then becomes what to do about it.

Creating systems change is slow and incremental, and many forces work against the success of such efforts. Chief among these are competing priorities, politics and shifts in the political environment, day-to-day work distracting us from long-term goals, and general inertia. Staying the course and marching toward change in light of these forces requires vision, funding, and stamina. And because the rate of return takes longer to realize, these efforts are often a hard sell to policymakers and funders.

All these considerations were on the minds of the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation (DDIAF) board members in 2012. How could they take these contextual factors into consideration and drive meaningful change within the complex, disjointed system of care that leaves older and homebound, vulnerable Iowans with inconsistent - and sometimes no - access to oral healthcare? One way was to support development of a framework, then foster partnership, creative thought, and action among a diverse set of individuals and organizations committed to tackling the problem.

LIFELONG SMILES - THE GENESIS

The fact that Iowa ranks high among states with an aging population was already well known. However, the extent to which access to oral healthcare was limited, the systemic barriers that impact access, and the reasons oral health should be a higher priority with this population were less known, especially outside the traditional oral health community. The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation board members knew that using data to tell the story was an important part of laying the groundwork to build support for a broad-based and long-term effort. To accomplish this, the board facilitated a **Collective Impact** process.

Over the course of 2012-13, an **Educate, Motivate, and Activate** methodology was utilized to create the context around which the Lifelong Smiles Coalition formed. This process sought to ensure a group of engaged stakeholders understood the issues and were armed with strategies to address them. To formulate the Coalition structure, an additional, ad hoc committee was formed to consider governance needs, membership, and policies. This later became the Steering Committee, which remains in place to ensure

the Coalition can quickly react and respond to issues and opportunities as needed.

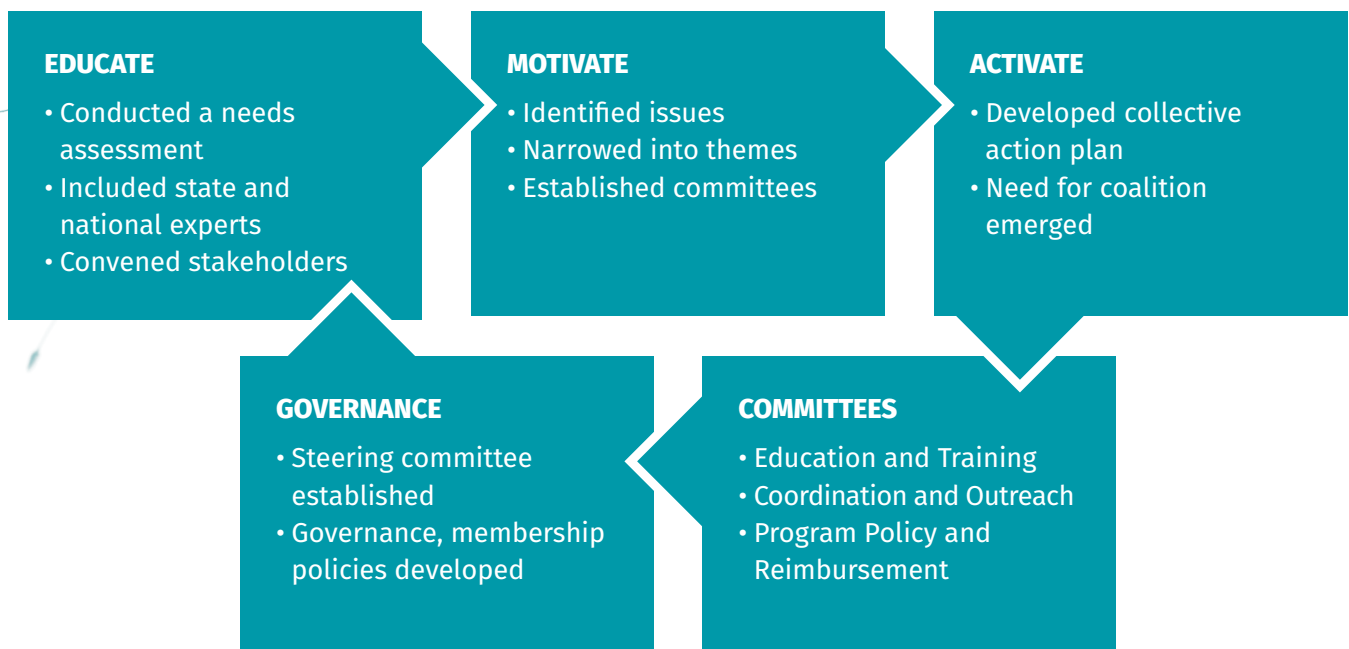
Once the structure was established, the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation staff purposely began to back away from the leadership role so that Coalition leadership and members were empowered to truly lead the Coalition. The Foundation's role evolved into a backbone organization to support the coalition's work. The Lifelong Smiles Coalition held their first meeting early in 2014.

Why focus on oral health for older Iowans?

Poor oral health can affect the ability to chew, swallow, and speak and contributes to malnutrition, inflammation, and self-esteem. Older Iowans residing in nursing facilities and homebound settings may also have immunocompromised systems and challenges accessing care.

Although there is a strong correlation between poor oral health and systemic conditions, Iowa lacks a coordinated system of oral health care for older adults.

Collective Impact Process Utilized to Establish the Lifelong Smiles Coalition



COALITION STRUCTURE

Establishing a governance structure was key to ensuring the Coalition was empowered to act independently from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. Foundation staff remained involved in a supportive role until a structure was firmly in place. This allowed Coalition leadership to move forward with its work.

Guidelines were established that addressed Coalition membership, rights, and voting processes. A Steering Committee was formed to ensure the Coalition was nimble and could act quickly when necessary. A series of committees were established to ensure key issues were closely addressed. Nomination processes and meeting frequencies were established. The Coalition Consultant was in place to provide coordination, ensure communications run smoothly, and provide staff support to the governance and committee structure.

Coalition membership has grown significantly over the last six years, from 12 organizational members in 2015 to 27 members in 2020. Notably, much of the growth has been in organizations not traditionally involved in oral health issues. This speaks to the success of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition in driving and expanding the oral health conversation and resulting in increased awareness and attention to the oral health needs of aging Iowans.



Lifelong Smiles Coalition Membership - Then and Now

2015

Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation
 Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 Iowa Caregivers
 Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association
 Iowa Department of Public Health
 Iowa Department on Aging
 Iowa Health Care Association
 Iowa Medicaid Enterprise
 Iowa Primary Care Association/
 Safety Net Collaborative
 Iowa Public Health Association
 LeadingAge Iowa
 The University of Iowa College
 of Dentistry and Dental Clinics
 The University of Iowa College of Nursing

***The mission of
 the Lifelong
 Smiles Coalition
 is to assure
 optimal oral
 health for aging
 Iowans.***

2020

DMACC
 Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation
 Delta Dental of Iowa, Dental Wellness Plan
 Dental Connections, Inc.
 EMBARC
 Easter Seals Iowa
 EveryStep
 Home Instead
 Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 Iowa CareGivers
 Iowa Dental Association
 Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association
 Iowa Department of Public Health
 Iowa Department on Aging
 Iowa Health Care Association
 Iowa Healthcare Collaborative
 Iowa Medicaid Enterprise
 Iowa Primary Care Association
 Iowa Public Health Association
 LeadingAge Iowa
 MCNA- Dental Wellness Plan
 Mid Iowa Community Action, Inc.
 Office of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
 Principal Financial Group
 Telligen
 The University of Iowa College
 of Dentistry and Dental Clinics
 The University of Iowa College of Nursing

LIFELONG SMILES COMMITTEES - A DEEPER DIVE

The Lifelong Smiles committees have remained constant since the inception of this effort, which speaks to the foresight of project leadership. In addition to ongoing support from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, the structure and governance established early on has proven critical to the ongoing success and commitment of participants.

The **Lifelong Smiles Steering Committee** serves as the governance of the Coalition. Along with the Coalition Consultant, day-to-day management and oversight

stem from this committee. The Steering Committee is responsible to ensure governance policies are followed and provide leadership to Coalition committees and grantees. This committee is also a critical link to the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation Board of Directors and staff to inform them of needs, progress, decisions, and direction of the Coalition.

Much of the focused activity of the Coalition occurs within the other Coalition Committees.

COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Focus: Develop and promote awareness, education, and training opportunities for oral health professionals, direct care workforce, and those providing care and support for older adults.

Committee Results

Ongoing Initiatives Created and Supported:

- Mouth Care Matters - a competency-based oral health specialty training curriculum for Direct Care Professionals serving persons in long term care and community-based, as well as health care settings
- Office of Education and Training - coordinates, develops, and promotes training opportunities for oral health professionals, the direct care workforce and those providing care for older adults in Iowa
- I-Smile Silver - creates local systems to help older Iowans prevent dental disease, access oral health care, and maintain good overall health

Committee Direction

In January 2020, subcommittee members utilized a Relevance and Impact Model to assess member activities in the Education and Training Subcommittee Action Plan. As a result, some activities, such as the oral health champion, were retired, while others will continue on in the 2020 Action Plan. Additionally, other activities were generated and added to the action plan.

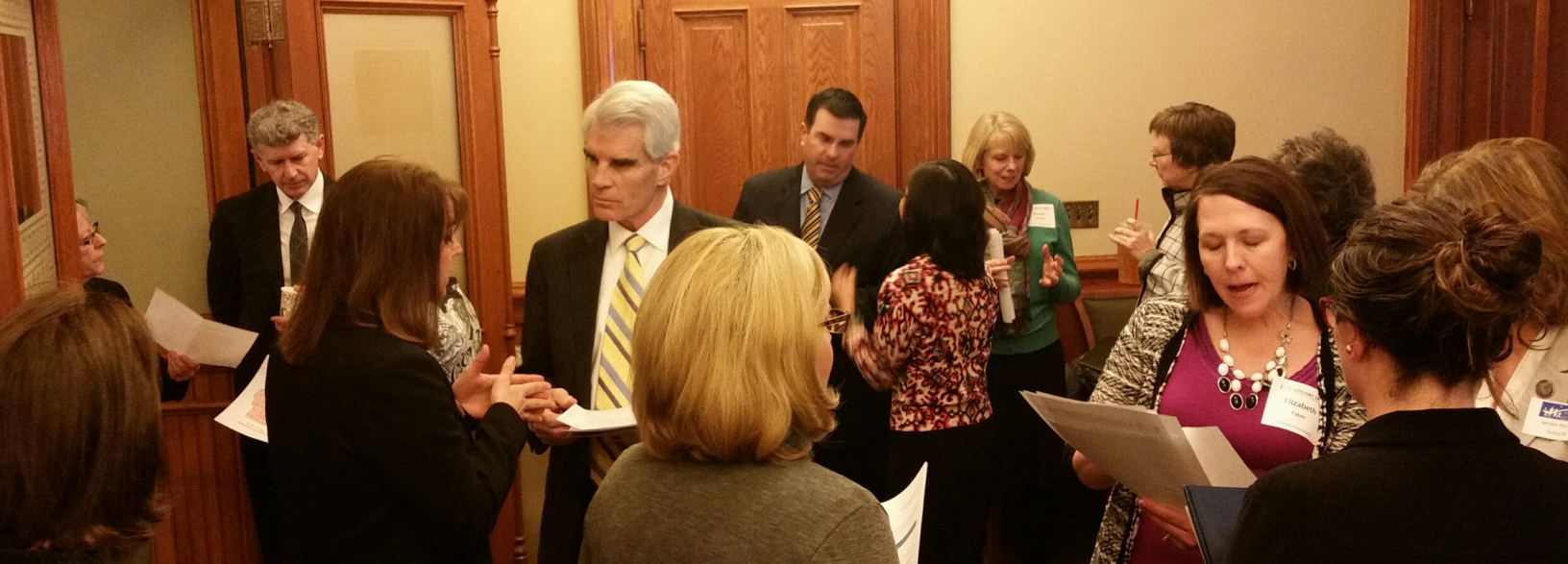
Lifelong Smiles Education and Training Committee Action Plan — January 2020

Continued support for Office of Education and Training and Mouth Care Matters

Facilitate Coalition member presence at related conferences

Long Term Care Services and Supports (LTSS) Health Toolkit

Monitor workforce development initiatives related to oral health and aging Iowans



COMMITTEE: **PROGRAM POLICY AND REIMBURSEMENT**

Focus: Stay actively engaged in policy activities related to oral health care and aging and explore innovative payment models.

Committee Results

Ongoing Initiatives Created and Supported:

- Tele-dentistry - The Lifelong Smiles Coalition continues to focus on innovative strategies to advance access to care for all populations, and tele-dentistry has potential to level the playing field in terms of improving access
- Policy shifts include allowance of preventive services provided by I-Smile™ Silver project to qualify as meeting Healthy Behavior requirements for Dental Wellness Plan members
- Advocacy/educational resources developed to promote reimbursement for use of fluoride varnish for older adults and for preventive dental benefits to be added to Medicare

Committee Direction

In January 2020, committee members utilized a Relevance and Impact Model to assess member activities in the Program Policy and Reimbursement Committee Action Plan. Resulting action plan items are included in the table below.

Lifelong Smiles Coalition Program Policy and Reimbursement Committee Action Plan — January 2020

Monitor Civil Monetary Penalty Funds and distribute updates to Coalition members
Examine the ability for Medicaid to cover fluoride varnish application for older populations for medical professionals
Act on information gathered from I-Smile™ Silver pilot project- learn about cost-savings and other components that can be applied statewide
Promote current Medicaid dental benefits
Promote rules changes to allow expansion of Tele-dentistry
Monitor legislative activity

COMMITTEE: COORDINATION AND OUTREACH

Focus: Provide outreach to the public and stakeholders about the importance of optimal oral health and support strategies that coordinate access to care.

Committee Results

Ongoing Initiatives Created and Supported:

- Social Media Outreach - Campaigns were developed, including National Healthy Aging Month, #BubbleChallenge, and #HealthyAging
- Emergency Department Discharge Plans - Plans were created for referral to I-Smile™ Silver following dental-related visits
- Collaborations - Referral systems were established with dentists and other healthcare providers. A partnership was established with the Iowa Healthcare Collaborative to incorporate oral assessment, referral, and care coordination into the Statewide Diabetes Strategic Plan

Committee Direction

In January 2020, committee members utilized a Relevance and Impact Model to assess member activities in the Coordination and Outreach Committee Action Plan. Resulting action plan items are included in the table below.

Lifelong Smiles Coalition Coordination and Outreach Committee Action Plan — January 2020

Support expansion of I-Smile™ Silver

Coordinate social media efforts

Promote oral health with company/organizational human resource departments

Continue strategies for outreach to dentists

Seek and promote media interviews



COMMITTEE: SUSTAINABILITY

Focus: Implement strategies for sustainability for membership, stakeholders, leadership, and coalition retention and growth.

Committee Results

- Developed a strategic recruitment plan for Coalition members
- Developed an orientation plan for new Coalition members
- Created a retention/engagement plan for Coalition members
- Developed a Coalition leadership succession plan
- Built a knowledge base of long-term and diversified funding and resource options
- Coalition membership diversified beyond organizations directly involved in oral healthcare

Committee Direction

In January 2020, committee members utilized a Relevance and Impact Model to assess member activities in the Sustainability Committee Action Plan. Resulting action plan items are included in the table below.

Lifelong Smiles Coalition Sustainability Committee Action Plan — January 2020

Contact new members to answer questions and ensure they are engaged and comfortable with their level of participation

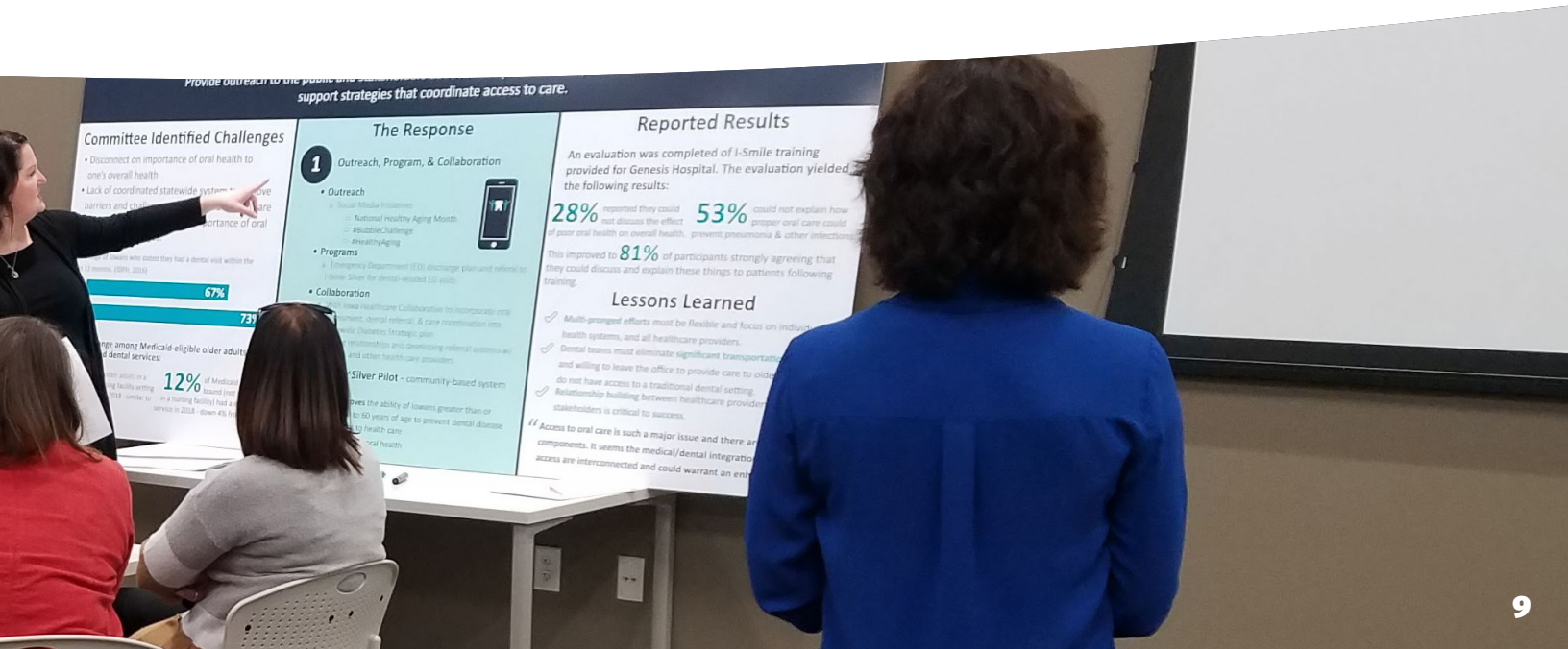
Ensure term limits are tracked and communicated to Coalition members

Promote the Coalition's successes - such as the Geriatrics and Special Needs Certificate program, to establish value for sustainability purposes

Implement plan to identify and recruit potential new Coalition members

Execute Coalition engagement plan tasks, including meeting education session schedule

Continue to increase knowledge of funding/sustainability options



INVESTING IN INITIATIVES

The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation has been the largest investor — more than one million dollars since 2015 in the three largest Coalition initiatives as well as funding the administrative and marketing of the coalition.

The three initiatives are I-Smile™ Silver, Mouth Care Matters, and the Office of Education and Training.

The Foundation Board was very deliberate in ensuring the empowerment of the Coalition leadership and membership in determining collectively the barriers and solutions to address oral health issues for older adults.

A fundamental expectation from the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation is that the initiatives align to support and promote the work of each other. This was readily embraced by the Lifelong Smiles Coalition members and the initiatives funded through the work. This interconnectedness has been a primary tenet of Lifelong Smiles and critical to the success in gaining cross-sectoral support to drive systems change. “Letting the leaders lead” has yielded strong commitment and promising results.

Value Added - DIRECT IMPACTS

Under the leadership of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition, three initiatives have been funded. Each works together to share expertise and resources, but are managed by different organizations, generate work products, and have outcomes resulting from their work. In addition to the work of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and committees, the funded initiatives have emerged as important drivers of change.



By placing the Lifelong Smiles Coalition at the helm of the initiative, the Coalition determines the direction necessary to drive goals and makes funding recommendations to the Foundation Board. The application is submitted as a staff recommended grant for approval.

*- Suzanne Heckenlaible,
Executive Director, Delta Dental
of Iowa Foundation*



I-SMILE™ SILVER

Coordinated by the Iowa Department of Public Health and initiated in late 2014, I-Smile™ Silver is a program that helps adults obtain dental care. Modeled after the I-Smile™ program for children, I-Smile™ Silver is a pilot project for Iowa adults and is currently available in ten Iowa counties, including Calhoun, Des Moines, Hamilton, Humboldt, Lee, Pocahontas, Scott, Van Buren, Webster, and Wright.



Program Aims

I-Smile™ Silver strategies include:

- Assessing community needs and assets related to oral health
- Providing training for medical providers, direct care staff, and home care providers
- Creating referral networks with dental and medical offices to address oral health needs
- Facilitating access to dental care by providing care coordination assistance to Iowa adults
- Providing gap-filling preventive dental services

These strategies are played out both programmatically and within the pilot counties in myriad ways - examples include:

- Working with Iowa State University to incorporate oral assessment into their internship practicum in the dietetics program
- Partnering with Genesis Hospital to develop and implement oral hygiene protocols for patients during hospital stays to prevent cases of non-ventilator hospital-acquired pneumonia
- Partnering with the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) and Lifelong Smiles Coalition to develop a public awareness campaign, “Don’t Retire Your Dental Care,” in an effort to improve dental insurance literacy
- Establishing a network of dentists who will work with the Veteran’s Trust Fund, which pays for dental services for qualified veterans, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs

In fall of 2019, a resident in the Webster County Health Department service area contacted the I-Smile™ Silver coordinator about the need for a denture. The patient was undergoing cancer treatment and received a referral to I-Smile™ Silver from the UnityPoint Cancer Center care coordinator. The patient was having difficulty eating and maintaining a healthy diet and weight due to an ill-fitting denture. The client was on a fixed income and experiencing intensified financial

Program Highlights — I-Smile™ Silver Outcomes

Findings from nearly 900 oral screenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than 25% adults don't know whether they have dental insurance.• Nearly 50% need early or urgent dental care.• One in 10 adults have a soft tissue lesion that requires further examination.
Trainings and presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than 300 since 2015 to more than 6,000 participants.
Care coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connected nearly 1,000 adults to dental, medical, and social resources (66% success rate).• Of the adults served, 41% lack a payment source for needed dental treatment.• 37% need help finding a dentist to provide treatment.

Program Path

Looking forward, the I-Smile™ Silver program expects to continue driving the trajectory toward integration of oral health into the medical system with opportunities to address issues in chronic disease management, non-ventilator hospital-acquired pneumonia, emergency department visits for dental-related disease, and assuring access for adults with medically necessary dental needs. Ongoing strategies and new opportunities to address I-Smile™ Silver aims will continue to move forward, both at the programmatic and local levels, to include:

- Working with Iowa Medicaid to create a system that allows I-Smile™ Silver to assist with care coordination services for Dental Wellness Plan members, including helping them meet Healthy Behaviors requirements to reduce lapses in coverage and/or monthly fees.

- Finding or creating alternative payment sources for medically-necessary dental care for uninsured individuals.
- Partnering with dentists to ensure a referral network exists for all Iowans and exploring alternative forms of treatment for patients with high levels of dependency and lower tolerance for invasive dental treatments.
- Measuring the impacts of prevention and intervention of oral disease on the Quadruple Aim.
- Evaluating I-Smile™ Silver to determine best approaches for expanding I-Smile™ Silver throughout the state in order to make it available to all Iowans.

hardship due to copayments required for daily radiation therapy. The I-Smile™ Silver coordinator worked with the patient to identify resources, providers, and payment options within the community. The coordinator reached out to Donated Dental Services to seek program eligibility for the patient. Once approved and with the help of the Donated Dental Services coordinator, the patient was able to receive dental care within two months of referral to I-Smile™ Silver.

MOUTH CARE MATTERS

Mouth Care Matters (MCM) is an oral health program consisting of oral health in-services, MCM training for nurses and supervisors of direct care staff, a six-module competency-based oral health training for direct care staff MCM curriculum. It was originally designed for those in direct care and since tailored for a wide array of health care professionals serving in a variety of settings. Managed by the Iowa CareGivers and taught by certified instructors who are dental hygienists, the program advances practical, hands-on skills and knowledge on how to provide the best oral care possible for Iowans of all ages and abilities, and prepare providers with tools to operationalize oral health best practices.

Program Aims

- Arm those who provide direct care and others with practical knowledge and skills so they can provide optimal oral care.
- Provide health and LTSS employers/providers with the tools needed to integrate and maintain oral care best practices.
- Collaborate with AARP Iowa, family caregiver program via area agencies on aging and others in identifying strategies to educate consumers and family caregivers about the importance of good oral care as a means to prevent premature nursing home placement.
- Foster public and private sector partnerships to build the structure and system needed to support and sustain MCM via community colleges/U of I College of Dentistry; centralized direct care worker data base system to retain workforce data and record MCM and other direct care worker training.

Program Path

Looking forward, the Iowa CareGivers plans to maintain and expand access to Mouth Care Matters training to those who provide direct care across the state and continue to pursue further evidence-based status. IC will employ efforts to secure ongoing support needed to administer, integrate, update, promote, and track the program.

Specifically, future activities will include:

- Journey mapping to explore additional modes of training delivery (e.g., online modules) and fee structure.
- Increase access to MCM by working with DMACC, other community colleges, and University of Iowa in modifying MCM to online and Zoom modules in addition to the face to face.
- Formalize collaborative roles with community colleges and COD/CON via formal letters of agreements.
- Seek and secure funding to coordinate a statewide oral health promotion in which the MCM Employer Implementation Toolkit will be reproduced and distributed to all health and LTSS employers in the state and will include the various training options (online/ Zoom/face-to-face at community colleges).
- Customize program for dietitians, therapists and other professionals.
- Foster public and private partnerships to build state infrastructure including a centralized direct care worker data base system needed to build a strong direct care workforce that is well prepared for deployment in times of crisis and always.



Program Highlights — Mouth Care Matters (MCM)

MCM trained 700 health professionals, including 663 health care workers and 37 dental hygienist instructors

- Collaborated with DPH, and University of Iowa Colleges of Nursing and Dentistry in development of MCM oral health curriculum.
- Recruited, trained, and retained nearly 80% of originally trained statewide cadre of 37 MCM instructors.
- Provided MCM training in 67 of 99 Iowa counties.
- More than 12,597 older Iowans and people with disabilities received improved oral care as a result of the training.
- Seventy-six percent of participants surveyed said they improved their own/family members' oral care.
- Qualitative evaluations consistently rank MCM excellent or very good; and participation increases the likelihood that people will remain in the field of direct care and with their current employer.
- Developed and distributed 12 oral health educational articles to about 10,000 people statewide via the Hub newsletter and social media.
- Developed a dedicated MCM page on the IC website.
- Recognized as an oral health best practice by the National Rural Health Association, and other state have expressed interest in MCM.

The University of Iowa College of Dentistry evaluated MCM oral health educational program for certified nursing assistants (CNAs)

- Findings indicated that educating at least 50% (a critical mass) of CNAs in the MCM oral health training positively impacted the oral health of nursing facility residents who participated in the pilot

Sustainability through collaboration

- Additional financial support secured from Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, Iowa Department of Public Health, Polk County Health Department, Central Iowa Works, and RRF Foundation for Aging.
- Expanded MCM to nurses, dietitians, therapists, and other health care professionals to increase awareness of the need and benefits of good oral care.
- Forged strong partnerships with community colleges, various health and long-term service and support (LTSS) employers/providers; Broadlawns; Polk County Health Department; aging and disability groups; hygienists, therapists and dietitians; and members of the LLS Coalition which will provide greater capacity for expansion.

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY AND DENTAL CLINICS - OFFICE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Office of Education and Training was established in 2014 and is located within the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics. The Office coordinates, develops, and promotes training opportunities for oral health professionals, the direct care workforce, and those providing care for older adults in Iowa.

Program Aims

- Increase access to oral care for nursing home residents and homebound adults.
- Increase the number of dentists, hygienists, and direct care professionals involved with oral health care for the population.

“The spirit of collaboration - that we all promote each other, share expertise, and work together to produce resources - has been wonderful.”

- Di Findley, Iowa CareGivers



**College of Dentistry
and Dental Clinics**

Program Highlights

- Submission and subsequent inclusion of Lifelong Smiles Coalition in “Best Practice Approaches for State and Community Oral Health Programs,” a publication of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) in 2016.
- Presentations to a variety of professional, academic, and community-based organizations (13 as of 2020).
- Developed original, two-day and modified, one-day Mouth Care Matters (MCM) curriculum for an oral health care specialty area of the Prepare to Care training program.
- Implemented DDS/NP Program in the Geriatric & Special Needs Clinic at the College of Dentistry.
- Implemented the BSN interprofessional practice program with the College of Nursing.
- Mouth Care Matters curriculum shared with Geriatric Education Center for the development of an Oral Health Care App (GeriaDental) for use with DCWs.
- Developed stories for website and other advertisement use.
- Established the Visiting Scholar Program for dentists interested in getting more extensive hands-on experience with the provision of care for the elderly in nursing homes and office setting.
- Sponsored training for dental hygienists to be trainers of the MCM curriculum.
- Evaluated the effectiveness of the MCM program with CNAs in nursing facilities on the oral health of residents.

Program Path

- Curriculum development/modification and evaluation of the Mouth Care Matters program.
- Grant submission assistance.
- Maintain Speakers Bureau and resources for education and program development.

SCATTERED SEEDS

Beyond the direct impacts of the three Lifelong Smiles Coalition initiatives, there were many “scattered seeds” of good work that have spread, planted and ultimately had significant impact on the work of optimizing the oral health of older Iowans during this same time. Examples of these “macro” impacts by other key partners include:

- **Delta Dental of Iowa Geriatric and Special Needs Professorship at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics** - A significant investment (\$750,000) was made aimed at attracting and ensuring continued dedicated geriatric and special needs education for dental students to provide care in the future.



- **Development of a Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry Certificate Program at The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics** - This one-year program, in collaboration with disciplines in medicine and psychiatry, prepares dentists to be leaders and teachers in Geriatric and Special Needs Dentistry.

- **Dental Connections** - This safety net children’s dental provider located in Des Moines now also serves older adults.
- **State Innovation Model (SIM) Social Determinants of Health work group** - Due to involvement of Lifetime Smiles Coalition members in this work group, oral health screening questions have been added to the health risk assessments Iowa Medicaid requires of the managed care organizations.
- **Iowa Medicaid Enterprise** - The payment method for silver diamine fluoride within public health settings, including nursing facilities, has been established via changes to public health supervision of dental hygienists.
- **Iowa Public Health Association** - The IPHA introduced oral health information/initiated discussions with local boards of health and promoted inclusion in Community Health Needs Assessment processes.
- **Iowa Dental Board** - The Iowa Dental Board passed administrative rules on December 10, 2019 to define and provide a framework for the practice of tele-dentistry in Iowa.
- **Iowa Dental Board’s Omnibus bill** - This bill included the removal of restrictions that hygienists can only provide services in a dental office, public or private school, public health agency, hospital, or the armed forces. HF 2267 bill became effective July 1, 2020.

“Measurement of direct impacts is important, but it doesn’t tell the entire story. As a Coalition, we want to see permanent practice and systems change. This requires awareness and impact across sectors. It requires people you wouldn’t expect to understand the issue to be talking about it. Beyond the direct impacts we are supporting, this is what we really want to see happen.”

- Nancy Adrianse, Coalition Chair

THE PATH FORWARD

In February 2020, the DDIAF supported an evaluation session for the Lifelong Smiles Coalition members. Facilitated by Teresa Doksum of S.E. Foster Associates, this session was based on the experience S.E. Foster Associates had in evaluating complex systems change efforts in Maine. There, they used a cross-initiative evaluation approach that utilized a logic model, developmental and participatory evaluation, and evaluation exercises with grantees. This format was condensed and adapted for an abbreviated one-half day evaluation session for the Lifelong Smiles Coalition.

Two exercises were shaped to optimize input from Coalition members. Large posters, one for each Committee, were developed to summarize the work and outcomes of each committee. Then, a poster or “data walk” exercise occurred, where small groups rotated through each poster station. There, committee and grantee leadership summarized the work of the committee and led a discussion among participants, encouraging comments and suggestions on the work of the committee. Participants were asked what was missing or what data or information could be further enhanced or highlighted so that the “story” of that committee is accurately communicated.

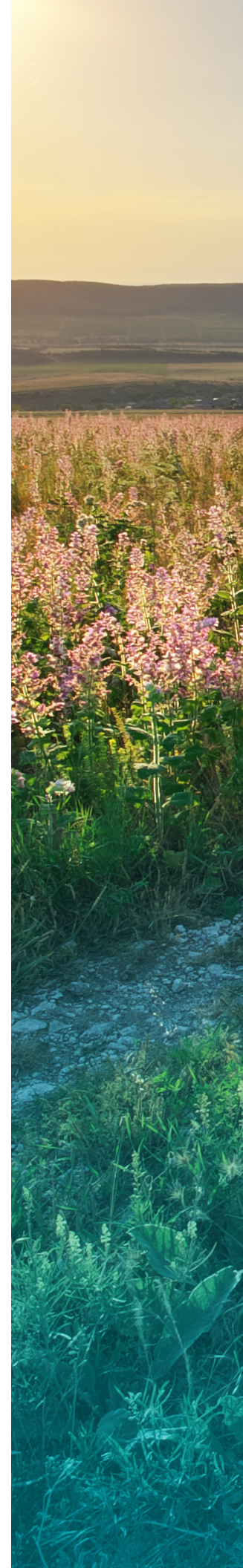
This poster structure also provided the framework for the “placemat” exercise. Placemats were developed and provided to each participant at each poster session. The placemats provided structure to elicit thoughts and ideas from Coalition members. Notes were jotted down on the placemats and left with the facilitators for compilation.

“I was encouraged to meet with everyone today. Sometimes, we get caught up in what we do on a daily basis, that we lose sight of the greater good. Meeting with like minds, that share a passion for advocating for oral health access for all aging Iowans was encouraging. Gathering and sharing ideas and seeing everyone’s drive for what they do, is exactly what I needed to stay focused and motivated. I’m happy to be a part of Lifelong Smiles!”

- Heather Barber, Home Instead

In order for organizations to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, they need to coordinate their efforts and work together around a clearly defined goal. This collective impact approach is based on organizations forming cross-sector coalitions to make meaningful and sustainable progress on social issues. The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation Board of Directors recognized the value of establishing and supporting a broad-based coalition early on and have provided continued support for more than six years.

So, have these efforts been successful in “spurring a conversation about oral healthcare for aging Iowans”? Lifelong Smiles Coalition members remain committed and new organizations continue to join. The committees and grantees continue in their work. And myriad impacts, both direct and indirect, continue to emerge. Given these certainties, all involved in Lifelong Smiles efforts should feel proud of the work accomplished, energized, and motivated to drive continued innovation and systems change on behalf of Iowa’s aging and homebound populations. The infrastructure now exists to do so.





“As a foundation, we learned to approach our investments differently. Our understanding of how we could be most effective with our investments needed to evolve; and in addition to investments with short-term returns (outcomes), we also needed to get comfortable with the fact that upstream efforts require longer-term vision and structure. The collective impact approach that resulted in the recommended creation of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition, and subsequent funding from the Foundation was an important first step in this direction.”

- Jeff Russell, President, Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation

LEARN MORE ABOUT LIFELONG SMILES COALITION

For more information about the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and its work, contact Elizabeth Faber, Coalition consultant, at **LifelongSmilesCoalition@gmail.com** or visit **LifelongSmilesCoalition.com**.