

THE PATH TO A MORE EFFICIENT & SUSTAINABLE VDH DENTAL PROGRAM

The Problem: Dental Clinics Funds Were Eliminated Without Appropriate Planning

The introduced budget dismantled Virginia Department of Health Dental Clinics with no comprehensive plan in place to care for the **20,000 individuals, including more than 16,000 children, who rely on these clinics for dental services**. Without a plan-of-action, Virginia's most vulnerable have few or no options for dental care, leading to higher costs elsewhere in the health system, including the hospital emergency room.

The budget adopted by the 2012 General Assembly restored the funding for the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) local dental clinics for the first year of the biennium only. The approved budget contained language directing the Commissioner to appoint an advisory panel to facilitate the transition to a prevention-only model. This work is not yet complete and more time is required to transition the dental clinics to a prevention-only model.

Our Goal:

Restructure the VDH dental program to create an efficient, effective and sustainable dental program that provides, primarily, oral health **prevention services** in localities with need.

How?

Fund VDH dental clinics at current levels (\$967,944 GF) and implement targeted recommendations of the Oral Health Stakeholder group to transition the program to a prevention-based model beginning in FY2015.

Why?

Many of the VDH dental clinics are the 'only game in town' for the underserved. If they cease to provide comprehensive care without sufficient planning, patients will be left with nowhere to turn leading to an increase in emergency room visits and preventable hospitalizations.

Bottom Line

The program should not be eliminated on June 30, 2013 and the current program should be funded through the next fiscal year and a detailed transition plan presented to the GA by October 1, 2013.

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Supported By: The Virginia Dental Association, The Virginia Oral Health Coalition, The Virginia Dental Hygienists Association, The Virginia Community Healthcare Association, The Virginia Health Care Foundation, The Virginia Rural Health Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics – Virginia Chapter, The Virginia College of Emergency Physicians, the Medical Society of Virginia and VCU School of Dentistry.