



# Prepare to Care

## ... Mouth Care Matters ...

Oral Health Education for Direct Care Professionals



Older Americans make up a growing percentage of the US population; according to the 2010 US Census, there were 40.3 million people aged 65 and older, making up 13.0 percent of the population. By 2050, that number is expected to increase to 20.9 percent. Oral health is an important but often overlooked aspect of an older adult's general health.

Oral health problems in older adults make it more difficult for them to consume a healthy diet. Oral health related physical factors directly affecting nutrition include: changes in chewing ability, dry mouth commonly caused by a side effect of medicine, untreated tooth decay, loose or missing teeth, and ill-fitting partials or dentures. Being homebound or institutionalized increases the risk of poor oral health. In fact, older adults may have new tooth decay at higher rates than children. (Centers for Disease Control, 2006; Administration on Aging, 2014).

### Who are Direct Care Professionals?

Direct Care Professional (DCP) is an umbrella name for the 78,000-strong workforce in Iowa. Direct care professionals are defined as individuals who provide supportive services and care to people experiencing health conditions, illnesses, or disabilities and receive compensation for such services. They may work in home-based, community-based, or facility settings. They may have job titles such as direct support professional, supported community living worker, home health aide, direct care worker, and universal worker. The umbrella term also includes other jobs titles like hospice aide, personal assistant, and certified nursing assistant.

### Why Does Oral Health Care Matter?

The mouth is the portal of entry to the rest of the body. "There is no health without oral health!" (Surgeon General, Report on Oral Health, 2000) Oral Health can affect general health in very direct ways.

- » Oral health problems can cause pain and suffering as well as difficulty in speaking, chewing, and swallowing.
- » Loss of teeth is associated with loss of self-esteem.
- » Poor oral health has been linked to many health problems, including stroke, heart attack, diabetes, and the number one cause of death in nursing homes: pneumonia.
- » Oral cancer results in nearly 8,000 deaths each year. More than half of these deaths occur among persons 65 years of age and older.

### Who Should Care About Oral Health? Everyone, including:

- » Consumers
- » Family members
- » Direct care professionals
- » Health and long term care employers
- » Educators
- » Local Boards of Health

## Mouth Care Matters Project

Mouth Care Matters is an initiative of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition supported by the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. Mouth Care Matters will develop and test an Oral Health Specialty Training for direct care professionals over the next two years. Through a partnership with the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and the College of Nursing, the Oral Health Specialty Training curriculum will be developed and will become the first state recognized specialty under the State's new Prepare to Care curriculum designed for those who work in direct care. This training will increase access to and improve oral health care of older Iowans who are homebound or living in nursing homes, improving their overall health, comfort, and dignity. Iowa CareGivers was awarded funding for this project from Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, and the Iowa Department of Public Health through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement (#DP13-1307).

### Potential benefits of Oral Health Specialty Training include:

- » Keeping consumers and clients healthier overall – “there is no health without oral health”
- » Providing much needed expertise for the direct care workforce
- » Ensuring staff are safe and knowledgeable while performing duties
- » Providing training on managing difficult behaviors during oral care, as well as on oral implants and equipment
- » Increasing efficiency and easing time constraints for those providing direct care.
- » Reducing turnover by providing specialized, sought-after expertise
- » Making oral health a priority

### Steps of the Mouth Care Matters Two-Year Project:

- » Curriculum development with University of Iowa College of Dentistry and College of Nursing that aligns with the State's oral health competencies for those who work in direct care
- » Training of Instructors to prepare them to deliver the Oral Health Specialty Training to those working in direct care
- » Recruitment of public health, home care, assisted living, and nursing facility employers and those who work in direct care to participate in the project and test the new training
- » Training of those who work in direct care
- » Outreach and promotion
- » Evaluation of the program

### Mouth Care Matters is Available in Central Iowa

The Oral Health Specialty Training can be taken by individuals who have already completed the Prepare to Care Core training, which is available free of charge both online and in-person through June 30, 2015. The Oral Health Specialty Training will be available to direct care professionals starting Fall 2015 in the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) region.

The DMACC region includes all or portions of Adair, Audubon, Boone, Carroll, Clarke, Crawford, Dallas, Greene, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hardin, Jasper, Lucas, Madison, Mahaska, Marion, Marshall, Polk, Poweshiek, Shelby, Story, and Warren counties.

### Learn more about Oral Health Specialty Training for Direct Care Professionals at:

<http://www.iowapreparetocare.com/>

### For more information on oral health for older adults, visit:

<http://www.toothwisdom.org/care/state/iowa>

### Supported by the Lifelong Smiles Coalition



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