



# 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 effecting 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: Oral Health Education for Direct Care Professionals

Mouth Care Matters is one of three major initiatives of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition supported by the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation (DDIAF), and administered by Iowa CareGivers. <http://www.lifelongsmilescoalition.com/initiatives.php> The overarching goal of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition initiatives is to increase access to oral health for older Iowans who are homebound or living in a nursing home. During the first two years of the Mouth Care Matters project, an oral health specialty curriculum was developed by the University of Iowa Colleges of Dentistry and Nursing as the first specialty under the state-recognized, competency-based Prepare to Care curriculum which is tailored to the direct care workforce. The curriculum was tested with 97 direct care professionals, taught by dental hygienists trained as instructors of this curriculum. Early evaluation results show a significant gain in knowledge by those who completed the training. Other funders of Mouth Care Matters include Mid-Iowa Health Foundation (MIHF) and the Iowa Department of Public Health through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement (#DP13-1307). The two additional Lifelong Smiles Coalition initiatives are the I-Smile Silver program and the Office of Education and Training at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry.

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 handling challenging situations 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

## Mouth Care Matters Progress

- » Mouth Care Matters oral health specialty curriculum was developed.
- » 23 dental hygienists completed Mouth Care Matters instructor training and all but 6 have had the opportunity to teach as part of the pilot project; all have been given the opportunity to teach.
- » 97 direct care professionals completed the training at 7 Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) training locations, as well as sites in Cedar Rapids and Ottumwa.
- » 2 of 15 community colleges have held a Mouth Care Matters class.
- » Two nursing facilities participated as case study sites providing opportunities to see how increased knowledge and skills in the area of oral health care transferred to care practices in the workplace.
- » Evaluation, conducted by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice, reveals early findings that there was a significant increase in knowledge gained by participants and informs curriculum review and modifications to curriculum and test questions.

## Mouth Care Matters in the Future

With two additional years of funding awarded by DDIAF and additional support from MIHF, the focus will be on:

- » Providing additional training opportunities through additional community college sites and to the staff at the case study sites
- » Training in-home care providers
- » Working with other Lifelong Smiles Coalition grant initiatives and other stakeholders to develop and test oral health best practices (protocols) for use by direct care professionals
- » Working with partners on sustainability and institutionalization of the Prepare to Care and Mouth Care Matters trainings into the overall infrastructure to support the effort

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, 2017.

## How to Access Mouth Care Matters Classes

- » Completion of the Prepare to Care 6-hour Core training is required before enrolling in a Mouth Care Matters Class. Watch for upcoming face-to-face classes, or check out the free online Core training at <https://directcare.training-source.org/>
- » If you are a direct care professional interested in enrolling in a Mouth Care Matters (MCM) class, an employer interested in enrolling staff, or a community college interested in holding a MCM class, please contact Mary Ann Young at Iowa CareGivers: [maryann@iowacaregivers.org](mailto:maryann@iowacaregivers.org) or call 515 223-2805. Visit [www.iowacaregivers.org](http://www.iowacaregivers.org) regularly as more information becomes available.

**Supported by the Lifelong Smiles Coalition**

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



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