NORTH DAKOTA DONATED DENTAL SERVICES (DDS) PROGRAM

Annual Report for July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

Fourth Quarter Report for April 1, 2015 - June 30, 2015

Annual Highlights

- $8.11 worth of care donated for every $1 spent supporting services.

The DDS Program in Action

Fifty-eight-year-old Ms. M. lives in New England and spent most of her life working as a housekeeper for hotels and cleaning services. Now, she suffers from severe osteoarthritis and needed a right hip replacement. Before she could proceed with the surgery, she had to have her dental issues addressed to receive clearance for the replacement. Some of her teeth were decaying or broken and her upper partial denture was nearly five years old.

Sadly, Ms. M. could not afford the treatment she needed. She did not have dental coverage and was unable to work due to her hip problems. She depends on food stamps and help from her boyfriend to make ends meet. Dental treatment, while vital to her overall health, was simply too expensive.

Thankfully, Ms. M.’s orthopedic surgeon referred her to the DDS program, and a generous team of volunteers agreed to help. Dr. F. extracted eight teeth, restored three others and donated two deep cleanings and a full upper denture. A volunteer laboratory fabricated the denture at no charge. **Thanks to these kind volunteers, Ms. M. received $6,000 in free care that restored her oral health, enabling her to receive dental clearance!** She wrote to express her genuine appreciation for this life-changing gift.

“I could not thank Donated Dental Services enough. If not for your services I could not have my hip replacement surgery.”

Program History

- Established in 1998 with endorsement from North Dakota Dental Association
- 742 total patients served
- $2,512,156 in total care donated by volunteers
- Volunteer Network: 135 dentists and 12 labs

Please Note:

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Accomplishments

The DDS program exists to help individuals with disabilities or who are elderly or medically fragile and cannot afford or otherwise access treatment for severe dental conditions. North Dakota’s DDS program is part of a national network of similar programs in 42 other states. Collectively these programs helped more than 7,000 individuals access over $24 million in services during the fiscal year.

Goal: Help 70 people with disabilities or who are aged or medically fragile receive $273,000 worth of comprehensive dental care during the fiscal year, including $29,000 in laboratory fabrications.

Results: 48 patients received $214,317 of treatment, including $17,967 in lab fabrications, below the goal due to reasons explained in the Staffing section below. (Two of these patients received $1,367 in routine care from volunteer dentists who had donated the patients’ initial treatment and wanted to continue donating ongoing, maintenance services.) Each patient treated (with the exception of the two patients receiving ongoing maintenance services) received an average of $4,629 worth of dental treatment; comprehensive care that illustrates the generosity of the volunteer dentists and labs.

At the end of the June 30th reporting period, 50 individuals had been referred to volunteer dentists and were receiving care (i.e., active patients). (Some of the patients treated this fiscal year are still undergoing treatment and are included in the 50 active cases.)

Applications

We received 85 applications during the fiscal year, and at the end of the June 30th reporting period, 37 people were waiting to be referred to a volunteer.

Volunteers

The volunteers are the backbone of the program, and we are truly grateful to the 135 dentists and 12 dental laboratories that participate statewide.

Of the 135 volunteer dentists, 31 are specialists and 104 are general dentists who receive initial referrals. With so many volunteer dentists, one might wonder why all of the individuals waiting have not been referred. Unfortunately, with the staff transition described in the following Staffing section, we were not able to utilize all available volunteers this fiscal year. Also, dentists and applicants are not always aligned geographically, making it difficult to utilize all available volunteers. We may have a volunteer dentist available in an area with no applicants or vice versa. When necessary, we inform local human service organizations about the DDS program and distribute applications.

Many dental laboratories also volunteer for the North Dakota DDS program. Along with the 12 labs physically located in North Dakota, additional out-of-state labs that are part of Dental
Lifeline Network’s national cadre also volunteer to help. This fiscal year, three such labs contributed their services for North Dakota DDS patients. We truly appreciate the generous efforts of all of our volunteers.

**Staffing**

The Coordinator determines applicant eligibility, links patients with nearby volunteer dentists, monitors patient progress and arranges laboratory services and the help of specialists as necessary. The Coordinator resolves any problems that may interfere with care and ensures all parties have a positive experience.

Ms. Marilyn Craig was the DDS Coordinator for many years until she retired last June. Management staff at our national headquarters coordinated the program for the first few months of the fiscal year while we searched for a new Coordinator. In October, we hired Mr. Adam Arellano to coordinate services for the North Dakota DDS program from our national office. Since we communicate with patients, dentists and labs via telephone and mail, not having a local Coordinator usually is invisible to patients and volunteers. Ms. Craig, for example, worked from her home office in Texas. It typically takes new Coordinators approximately one year to fully learn the position and gain proficiency. With a dedicated Coordinator devoting more time to the program than was spent during the transition, we expect a boost in services going forward.

**Financial Information**

*During the fiscal year, volunteers donated $8.11 in care for every dollar spent supporting contributed services!* While the volunteer dentists and many of the dental laboratories donate their services, we must raise funds to support their efforts and pay for the DDS Coordinator, lab reimbursements when we cannot find labs to donate, office supplies and other program expenses.

In 2000, the Red River Dental Access Program received a grant to develop a pilot DDS program in the Red River Valley Region of North Dakota/Minnesota and contracted with Dental Lifeline Network to operate the pilot program. In 2001, the North Dakota Department of Health awarded monies to the NDDA to expand the pilot program statewide with Dental Lifeline Network. The State Department of Health has continued to provide the funds to operate the DDS program and support the volunteers.

**Future Plans**

In the next fiscal year—July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016—our goal is to help 71 people with disabilities or who are aged or medically fragile receive at least $280,000 worth of free dental care, including $20,000 worth of donated laboratory fabrications.