

Low-Income Sjögren's Patients May Qualify For Free Dental Treatment

Dry mouth in Sjögren's patients causes a decrease in both the amount and quality of saliva, which ultimately results in tooth decay. Patients often experience substantial dental bills that are not considered part of major medical insurance. While the SSF continues to advocate on Capitol Hill for better health coverage for Sjögren's patients, we are now partnering with Dental Lifeline Network to provide an option for patients with limited financial income.

Sjögren's patients who have limited financial resources may be eligible for free, comprehensive dental treatment through Donated Dental Services (DDS), a program operated by Dental Lifeline Network. Below is more information on the DDS Service.

Who Qualifies?

Through its 15,000 volunteer dentists and 3,800 volunteer dental labs nationwide, DDS offers comprehensive dental care to people who lack financial resources or access to dental care and:

- Are age 65 or older or
- Have permanent disabilities or
- Are medically fragile: require surgery or medical treatment but cannot qualify for what they need until their dental needs have been met (due to the risk of infection from their dental disease). *(Medically fragile patients include people in need of cardiac surgery, chemotherapy, organ transplants and joint replacements. Although Medicare may cover their medical needs, it does not cover the prerequisite dental care. Medicaid coverage for adult dental treatment in most states also is very limited.)*
- DDS is designed for people who need comprehensive dental care. Routine care is not a component of the program.



Meet Elizabeth, a Donated Dental Services (DDS) Patient

Michigan resident Elizabeth, age 52, worked for 24 years as a registered nurse until she was diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease that caused joint pain, vertigo and chronic migraines. Pain-relieving injections for her lupus symptoms led to dental disease, which also was painful. Unable to afford dental treatment, Elizabeth had not seen a dentist for eight years. Through Dental Lifeline Network's Donated Dental Services (DDS) program, volunteer Dr. Mark Johnston, a general dentist, donated the care Elizabeth needed by extracting a tooth, placing a new crown and fitting her with a partial lower denture. Although Elizabeth misses her work caring for others, she needed care herself. Thanks to Dr. Johnston, her oral health is restored. ■

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To qualify for the DDS program, applicants first must exhaust Medicaid, dental benefits they may have through the Veterans Administration, or any other dental coverage for which they are eligible.

Where is DDS Available?

The DDS program operates on a state-by-state basis throughout all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Accessibility depends on existing caseloads and the availability of volunteer dentists in specific areas. In some areas, wait lists may be temporarily closed until people who previously have applied can be treated. In many states, the DDS program offers immediate access for people seeking care. These states include some counties in Iowa, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Michigan, North Dakota, Alaska and Hawaii.

For information on your state, visit www.DentalLifeline.org, and click on *Our State Programs* (in the magenta bar at the top of the homepage). Then, click on your state for information. The right side of the state page indicates availability (sometimes based on county of residence), contact information for the state's DDS Coordinator and the opportunity to download an application form.

How to Apply

Applicants can download the online application form, or contact their state's DDS Coordinator to request a mailed application form. The form must be returned to the Coordinator. Treatment for people who require dental care to address life-challenging medical conditions may be expedited.

About DDS

DDS is a program of Dental Lifeline Network, a national charitable organization, with a mission to improve the oral health of people with disabilities or who are elderly or medically fragile and have no other way to get help. DLN accomplishes its mission by developing and coordinating collaborative relationships that provide essential resources for direct-service programs, especially charitable care. Since its inception in 1985, DDS has provided nearly \$300 million in donated dental therapies to vulnerable people.

Please note that all dentists are volunteers and this information is intended to provide the public with access to information on DDS dentists. The SSF encourages those using the service to bring information about Sjögren's to your appointment and inform the dentist of your specific symptoms. ■

IT'S TIME

United Way • Combined Federal Campaign • State Payroll Deduction

Each fall your local United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, state employee, and private employer payroll deduction campaigns begin. We hope you will remember the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation when choosing where to allocate your donation. **(CFC #10603)**

If we are not listed on the contribution form, you usually may write in the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation.

Tell your co-workers, friends, and family members how important it is to choose and write in the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation on their campaign form too.

If your employers will not allow you to write in the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation, remind them that we are a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and qualify for most payroll

deduction campaigns. If they need more information, please contact the Foundation at 800-475-6473.

Just think – every dollar counts.

Last year alone – thanks to those who chose to give through their employer's payroll campaign – the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation was able to increase its Research and Awareness commitments.

Remember, the Foundation has received the:

