

# Quality is About Caring

## An Oral Health Study Guide for Dental Care Professionals



### BACKGROUND

People with intellectual disabilities experience teeth loss at a higher rate than the general population (*Oral health in America: Reports of the Surgeon General, 2000*). Some of the reasons include inadequate oral health self-care, oral secretions secondary to cerebral palsy, side effects of medications (decreased saliva secretions) and poor access to routine dental cleaning due to physical and insurance barriers.

According to the Surgeon General's Report, *Call to Action*, a number of implementation strategies must be put in place among individuals and

communities to improve the oral health and well-being of people with developmental disabilities. While these strategies are complex and vary across states, change in perceptions of oral health is needed at local, state, regional and national levels across all population groups (*A National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health, 2014*).

The District of Columbia Developmental Disabilities Administration Health Initiative (DDAHI) at the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development (GUCCHD), with funding from the District of Columbia Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) has created a video that demonstrates how oral health is an essential part of improving the overall health outcome of people with developmental disabilities.

The film, *Quality is About Caring*, features the community practices of two dentists in the District of Columbia (DC) who primarily serve adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). The film includes an in-depth guided tour of their respective offices and demonstrates the many advances in their dental practices that improve access to people with IDD, including both physical and behavioral accommodations.

*Quality is About Caring* also reviews the DC Medicaid program for dental services. Viewers will receive an extensive look into the oral health care system and how oral health care is provided to patients in the District. *Quality is About Caring* includes information on the structure of the national Medicaid system and analyzes the benefits and enhancements provided by the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver.

### USE OF THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide contains learning activities and discussion questions pertaining to the oral health status of people with IDD. The purpose of this guide is to increase awareness of the goals, expectations, preferences, needs and services for this population. Specifically, this study guide discusses supports for people with developmental disabilities, while increasing knowledge of the service system and promoting a vision for the future of oral health. It can be used by dental professionals who advocate with and on behalf of people with developmental disabilities.

## USE OF THIS STUDY GUIDE, contd.

It is recommended that facilitators use this study guide in conjunction with the oral health video, *Quality is About Caring*, to educate policy makers, health care providers, health professions students and advocates to help them identify and better understand how they can impact the policies and legislation that provide oral health care to people with IDD. The activities on the following page are intended to help non-professionals explore the community-based supports needed to improve oral health of people with developmental disabilities.

## ACTIVITIES

- Read your Medicaid state plan on oral health
- Research the existence of any statewide or regional committees/task forces that focus on oral health care and people with developmental disabilities
- Identify champions
  - Contact your state dental society and dental schools
  - Contact your State University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (see the Association on University Centers on Disability at [www.aucd.org](http://www.aucd.org))
- Collect data
- Tell your story
  - Need in your community
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Assess the environment related to state priorities and funding



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR DENTAL CARE PROFESSIONALS

- 1) If you are a dental student, do you think your program gives you the knowledge and skills to address the oral health needs of people with IDD? If you are part of the dental faculty, how do you need to modify teaching strategies to address the needs of people with IDD?
- 2) What technological advances and tools are necessary to improve the oral health status of people with IDD?
- 3) How does preventive dental care impact key components of overall health, such as pregnancy, cardiovascular disease and nutrition?
- 4) How does your current patient profile differ from those depicted in the video? How can you encourage people with IDD to visit your office?
- 5) What barriers are faced when serving people with IDD in a dental office? What is your role in addressing these barriers? What local resources are available to assist you and your dental office?
- 6) Are you familiar with the states that have a Medicaid dental waiver? What do you know about your Medicaid state plan?

**“Oral Health is a key component in overall health”**