



Giving Kids a Dental HEAD START in Our Community™

KinderSmile Foundation

Smiles for Seniors Oral Health and Wellness Program

Final Report

Summary:

Smiles for Seniors Oral Health & Wellness Program pilot program will identify 50 Trenton senior residents who are uninsured, or partially uninsured. We will provide oral health education and transition the participants to receive comprehensive dental care. These services will include but will not be limited to exams, radiographs, cleanings, treatment planning, extractions, fillings, partial and complete dentures. We anticipate that at least 55% of the participants will return on a biannual basis for their follow up checkup. We anticipate that at least 85% will adhere to the oral hygiene instructions provided. Each participant will be entered in our patient management system, Eaglesoft and will be tracked on the amount of visits for treatment, oral education sessions and biannual check up visits. At the end of the project, we will provide an assessment of the numbers of participants educated, provided treatment, and biannual checkups.

KinderSmile Community Oral Health Center Trenton currently partners with over 26 community organizations. We will identify the seniors from our existing community partners who are in need of dental services. This program will enable the seniors to properly masticate their foods, lead healthy lives, eliminate the progression of systemic diseases, and gain confidence. We will reach out to Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), Arc Mercer (Special Needs Adult), Capital Health Hospital, and Medina Community Clinic. KinderSmile Foundation has been asked by the New Jersey Dental Association (NJDA) to assist with providing dental services for the participants in “LifeLine” the NJ donated dental program.



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Successes:

1. Through the funding received from Friends Foundation for the Aging, KSCOHC Trenton was able to educate 40 seniors ages 60 years and older who participated in **Smiles for Seniors Oral Health & Wellness Program 2022**.
2. Providing dental care enabled KSF to immediately eliminate dental pain from 100% of participants, preventing the seniors from going to the hospital emergency room.
3. We educated 100% of participants on oral disease prevention and the importance of oral health to total body health and wellbeing.
4. We identified medically compromised seniors and referred them to a Medical Home for further treatment. Through the education, patients gained an understanding of the direct effect diabetes and hypertension has on their oral health.
5. We linked 100% of the participants to our Dental Home. 92% have returned for their 6 months check up.
6. We were able to restore and save teeth for 78% of the participants.
7. Many participants came from various community partnerships, including Trenton Housing Authority- Senior living, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
8. 100% of the Black male participants are retired veterans who struggled to receive access to oral healthcare for over 30 years. They were disqualified from services through the VA because they are NOT 100% disabled veterans. While the US Department of Veterans Affairs provides some dental services, veterans must meet strict criteria for outpatient dental care. Those with a service-connected compensable dental disability, or those who are considered 100% disabled as a result of service, are eligible for full dental care. Non-disabled veterans who recently served may be entitled to a “one-time course of free dental care,” but must apply within 180 days of an honorable discharge. There are almost 23 million US veterans, and over 85% of them do not qualify for any dental care through the VA. Recent news has exposed the lack of care for veterans, whose access to oral health care is subject to their ability to pay for services, qualify for insurance, and have access to a Dental Home.
9. We fabricated and delivered 26 prostheses (full and partial dentures) for the partially



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and/or fully edentulous patients; we performed 47 extractions; we restored 72 teeth were saved with restorative and/or endodontic treatment.

10. We prepared and delivered 13 PFM crowns and performed 10 crown lengthening surgeries.

11. Total value of care provided for the participating seniors was an astounding \$72,984!

This was a successful pilot project as we provided much needed services to our senior patients. Of the participants 50% were Hispanic and 50% were African American. This is a direct reflection on the demographics of the City of Trenton. Participants were 57.14% female and 42.8% male. Results of our pilot program indicated that females were more proactive with seeking and maintaining their oral health care than males, if given the opportunity and resources. The participants' ages ranged from 60 to 77 years old.

Challenges:

1. Increased costs of clinical supplies, PPE, and dental laboratory expenses since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.
2. Of the participants, 43% have not been seen or treated by a physician for chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, causing delays in treatment.
3. We had to place some potential participants on a wait list.
4. We had to reduce the number of participants in the program due to unforeseen circumstances, such as extra time and dental services that exceeded the allotted amount.
5. We were unable to market this pilot program to as many community partnerships as anticipated, due to an increased word of mouth interest.
6. We are still finishing up 15% of the cases. This delay is from interruption of medical attention and clearance needed prior to completing services.

Sustainability:

During the pre-assessment sessions with each participant, it was clearly revealed that dental



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services are a luxury due to many barriers. The main barrier was lack of dental insurance and surplus of income to afford copays and services. After treatment was completed, we did a post-assessment session and concluded that it may be difficult to sustain this program. We are evaluating whether this pilot program will be sustainable. Many of the participants are at or below FPL and on fixed incomes, and those who have Medicare are only eligible for limited services such as cleanings, x rays and exams. This adds to the lack of access to care due to many seniors being partially or fully edentulous, desiring Medicare to cover more comprehensive dental services. If Medicare extends the services for seniors beyond palliative care this will increase the opportunity for seniors to have access to oral healthcare.

Conclusion and Acknowledgment:

KinderSmile Foundation's Smiles for Seniors was 100% a successful pilot program. Many of the seniors teared up when they receive dentures for the first time in 20 years and were able to finally enjoy Holiday dinners with their families, or the senior who lost her job after COVID and was unable to pay for an extraction due to an abscess, or the seniors who received a basic cleaning and were able to smile with confidence again. We truly don't realize the magnitude of pain and discomfort that most of our seniors endure due to the barriers that prevent them from living a healthy life. We were able to forge long lasting partnerships with physicians who thanked us for the referrals. We plan to try the program again with some changes.

KSF website landing page lists Friends Foundation for the Aging as a spotlight sponsor. A description of the program is highlighted in KinderSmile Foundation's Annual Report and seasonal newsletters, distributed to all of our donors and partners. Printed flyers and promotional materials were distributed to our community partners, and social media postings were published of your support.

We are grateful for the support from Friends Foundation for the Aging, which enabled KinderSmile Oral Health Center Trenton to provide the much needed oral care access to the uninsured and underinsured seniors in the Trenton community.

Photos:

