



Smiles for Seniors Health and Wellness Program
Friends Foundation for the Aging Final Report Grant Year 2024-2025
KinderSmile Foundation

KinderSmile Foundation’s Smile for Seniors Health and Wellness Program focuses on improving the lives of aging adults in Trenton and vicinity by providing them with access to oral health care—the gateway to total health and wellbeing. Smiles for Seniors Oral Health & Wellness Program identified 23 Trenton senior residents who are uninsured, or partially uninsured. We provided oral health education and transitioned the participants to receive comprehensive dental care. Each patient was allotted at least \$800 for the dental care they required. These services included but were not limited to exams, radiographs, cleanings, treatment planning, extractions, fillings, partial dentures, and complete dentures. We anticipate that at least 67% 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 is entered into our patient management system to track visits for treatment, oral education sessions and biannual check up visits.

KinderSmile Foundation currently partners with over 300 community organizations. We identify senior residents who are in need of the additional support for dental care from our Dental Home or through our community partners and programs.

On behalf of our senior patients, we appreciate the support from Friends Foundation for the Aging. Our Smiles for Seniors Health and Wellness Program enables them to properly masticate foods, lead healthy lives, eliminate the progression of systemic diseases, and gain confidence.

In this grant cycle we continued to promote medical-dental integration, to ensure that our senior patients were properly linked to a medical home as well. We continued to provide Oral Health Education about the importance of oral health to total health and wellbeing. The importance of linkage to a medical home ensures that the patients present to their dental care appointments prepared with a medical clearance to avoid delays in care. We trust the through their link to a medical facility they are educated and tested for:

- Stroke prevention and recognition and response
- Diabetes and healthy diets and lifestyle choices
- Hypertension
- Diet and lifestyle choices

Smiles for Seniors patients are linked to KinderSmile Community Oral Health Center Trenton, where they were scheduled for diagnostic, preventive, and comprehensive dental care.



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Through continued and growing partnerships with Trenton area organizations and social services agencies such as HomeFront NJ, the Trenton Housing Authority, Capital Health Hospital, Henry J. Austin, and others, we recruited and enrolled 23 qualifying participants.

As in the past, we provided important oral health education, nutritional counseling, and tobacco counseling related to dental disease.

Our partnership with The Community Health Worker (CHW) Hub, sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) and managed by Acenda Integrated Health, enables us to serve individuals from various partners and agencies through Unite Us, the nation's trusted partner for social care transformation. The CHW Hub leverages its closed-loop referral technology to effectively screen community members for Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and Social Drivers' needs, facilitate care coordination, and connect them to vital community resources across 10 counties.

This year our Community Health Worker visited two senior centers in West Windsor and Robbinsville, and provided engaging and interactive oral health education sessions for the community.

Our upcoming partnership with Remote Area Medical (RAM), scheduled for November 8 and 9, will enable us to provide free dentures for seniors in the Trenton community, as well as vision exams and eyeglasses for children. We will reach out with promotional information for distribution when available.

Continued and growing collaborations with Trenton community partners and agencies ensures continued growth and expansion. We continue to raise awareness about oral health as the gateway to overall wellbeing.

Successes:

KSF's Smiles for Seniors Health and Wellness initiative pursues dental-medical integration, thereby increasing access to care while providing additional assistance to this growing at-risk community. Participants are afforded a long lasting impact for their oral and overall health, dental function, nutrition, self esteem, confidence, and more. Our ultimate goal is to establish a prompt link to a brick-and-mortar Dental Home, where comprehensive dental care can be provided regardless of a patient's insurance status or means at any time of need. Through partnership and collaboration, this grant included a link to a medical home as well.

In our prior grant cycles we experienced delays in being able to provide dental care, due to lack of a link to a medical home and the delays in obtaining medical clearances. Incorporating pivotal



medical-dental integration alleviates this gap. Referrals to medical care improve our efficiency in providing timely care and confirm that participating seniors are in good hands for their overall medical care needs.

KinderSmile Community Oral Health Center Trenton provided care to 103 seniors aged 60 and older in the last year. Of those, 23 were enrolled into the Smiles for Seniors Health and Wellness Program in this grant cycle. One of the 23 had insurance coverage but was denied coverage for the denture he needed. Patients received comprehensive dental care including 15 complete or partial dentures, 29 extractions, 15 restorations (fillings), 5 crowns, denture repairs, preventive care including exams, x rays, prophylaxis dental cleanings, emergency appointments, and more.

Challenges:

The fact that oral health is the gateway to total health and wellbeing cannot be overstated. Periodontal disease is related to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, dementia, nutritional health, confidence, and more. The incorporation of medical-dental integration enables us to provide an efficient way of linking our senior patients to a medical home and our Dental Home alike. Treatments were able to proceed as scheduled, without delays caused by the lack of medical clearance.

Access to care and resources must be expanded in order to improve the disparities. The dental care provided at KinderSmile Community Oral Health Center Trenton has an unmeasurable impact on patients' oral health, mental health, confidence, speech, and eating. The continued incorporation of medical-dental integration and prompt referrals to a primary care physician at a partnering medical will have a long term effect on our seniors' long term wellbeing.

Sustainability:

The main barrier was lack of dental insurance and surplus of income to afford copays and services. Similarly to our Perinatal Health and Wellness Program, the Smiles for Seniors program is solely grant-funded, enabling us to allocate grant funds directly into the patients' accounts.

Qualified participants are at or below the federal poverty level and those who have Medicare are only eligible for limited preventive care services. Lack of access to care in this community is exacerbated by this lack of coverage through this plan, as many seniors are partially or fully edentulous. We advocate for Medicare to expand dental services coverage to include comprehensive care.

KinderSmile Foundation and our programs remain sustainable and continue to grow over time through a combination of insurance reimbursements when applicable, reduced fees, pursuit of



grant opportunities, donations, and in kind donations of clinical supplies, as well as professional dental providers who donate their time and expertise to the uninsured.

Our Smiles for Seniors program will continue to press forward as we seek grants and donations to support inkind care for qualified participants. Future years of the program and expanded bandwidth will incorporate additional oral health education sessions to be held within our partnering community agencies in order to reach a wider audience. This grant year we were able to start this with sessions at two local senior centers.

Conclusion and Acknowledgment:

KinderSmile Foundation's Smiles for Seniors 2024-2025 was a success. The magnitude of pain and discomfort that many of our seniors endure due to the barriers that prevent them from living a healthy life. 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 to acknowledge your support.

We are grateful to The Friends Foundation for the Aging for sponsoring our Smiles for Seniors Health and Wellness Program. We look forward to the opportunity to continue to partner and collaborate with your organization in the future, in order to improve the quality of life, mental health, and total health and wellbeing of the growing and underserved senior community of Trenton and vicinity, as we continue to improve the program with time. This is a unique discipline for both funding and services, and we appreciate the opportunity to partner for our common goal of serving and providing crucial oral health care to this at-risk population

