

I-SMILE™ SILVER: A PILOT PROJECT TO IMPROVE ORAL HEALTH FOR OLDER IOWANS

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Dental care for older adults is a growing need as more and more Iowans enter retirement. In fact, by 2030, over 20% of Iowa's population will be over age 65. While many Iowans will rely on Medicare to cover the costs of needed medical services, dental care is currently not a Medicare benefit. Recognizing that oral health is a necessity for overall health, the Lifelong Smiles Coalition and the Iowa Department of Public Health have created a pilot project, I-Smile™ Silver.

What is I-Smile™ Silver?

I-Smile™ Silver is a pilot project that began in Scott, Lee and Van Buren Counties. Over the last two years, I-Smile™ Silver has been working within these counties to increase awareness on the importance of oral health for older Iowans and to coordinate access to dental care for Iowans age 60 and older, specifically those in nursing facilities, on Medicaid elderly waiver, and those receiving home-based health services. I-Smile™ Silver uses dental hygienists, known as I-Smile™ Silver coordinators, to work within their communities to identify the oral health needs of older Iowans, develop referral networks with local dentists, provide trainings for direct care professionals, promote the importance of oral health within communities, and coordinate access to dental care.

Using federal and Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation funding, in November 2016, the pilot will expand services to Des Moines County, as well as six counties in northwest Iowa that include: Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright. In addition, I-Smile™ Silver will begin to provide preventive dental services for residents of participating nursing facilities, an exciting opportunity to improve access to dental care for nursing facility residents.

I-Smile™ Silver and Mouth Care Matters

I-Smile™ Silver is teaming up with Mouth Care Matters (MCM) to create resources and tools that will help nursing facilities and home health organizations address residents'/clients' oral health needs. I-Smile™ Silver and MCM recognize that by working together we can increase opportunities for older Iowans to have better oral health. Stay tuned for more updates on this partnership!

For more information, contact the Iowa Department of Public Health at 1-866-528-4020.