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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation Funds Expansion of Mouth Care Matters (MCM) Program**  
*\$20,000 Grant to Support Implementation of Mouth Care Matters Program into Home and Community Based Settings*

Des Moines, IA (September 21, 2019)—Oral health for older Iowans receiving assistance in their homes or in assisted living communities is vital to maintaining good health and independence. Mouth Care Matters (MCM), an oral health training program for health care workers, was originally a major initiative of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition <http://www.lifelongsmilescoalition.com/> and supported through a grant from Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, Mid-Iowa Health Foundation, and the Iowa Department of Public Health. The program has demonstrated an increase in knowledge and skills of health care workers, as well as positive outcomes on those receiving better oral care by better prepared health care professionals.

Delta Dental's grant will be combined with a recently awarded Retirement Research Foundation <https://www.rrf.org/> grant, MCM Phase II: Employer Implementation Toolkit, which includes a package of comprehensive in-services, MCM trainings, oral health promotion and campaign materials, and much more.

Adults over the age of 65 are the fastest growing population segment in Iowa, and an estimated 70 percent have periodontal disease, affecting the ability to chew, swallow and speak. New research suggests solid evidence linking the bacteria causing periodontitis to memory loss and Alzheimer's disease, which affects 64,000 Iowans. Access to adequate oral healthcare is limited by a number of factors, including lack of awareness into the importance of prevention and a lack of direct care workers equipped to recognize risk factors of disease.

MCM is a training program for direct care workers, such as home care aides and nursing assistants as well as, nurses, social workers, dietitians, and other staff. These are the individuals who provide hands-on care and oral hygiene services for older Iowans, and it is important they understand the link between medications, dry mouth, bacteria in the mouth and aspiration pneumonia.

"Delta Dental recognizes the importance of maintaining oral and overall health especially in aging populations," said Suzanne Heckenlaible, executive director of the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. "Working with Iowa CareGivers and the Lifelong Smiles Coalition, we can continue the good work to train direct care workers to provide oral health care to their patients."

"We look forward to working with our project partners, Home Instead Senior Care, Western Homes Communities, Senior Housing Management, Iowa Healthcare Collaborative, and the University of Iowa College of Dentistry to further the overall priorities of the Lifelong Smiles Coalition," said Di Findley, executive director of Iowa CareGivers. For more information about Mouth Care Matters visit:

