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Missouri AHEC is Awarded a Workforce Development Grant from Delta Dental

According to Missouri Office of Dental Health, about 57,000 emergency department visits occur per year because of non-traumatic dental complaints which cost approximately \$21 million. There are also significant disparities in dental outcomes, including fewer dental visits and increased loss of permanent teeth among low-



income Missourians. They recommend improvements to the distribution and availability of oral health professionals, especially in low-income communities. They also recommend increased health promotion and education about the importance of oral health and dental visits. Missouri AHEC,

whose mission to improve the health of Missourians in rural and underserved areas through education and workforce development received funding through Delta Dental to improve access to care in these communities (referred to as Dental Professional Shortage Areas), to increase the number of rural and urban providers and reduce the decline in providers for oral healthcare statewide.

AHEC offices across the state developed strong dental pipeline programs in dental professional shortage areas across Missouri. This includes developing oral health science activities with middle and high school students, providing scholarships to dental students in training, providing shadowing and mentorship opportunities for students interested in dentistry and increase oral health education outreach efforts in rural and underserved areas.

So far, West Central Missouri (WCMO) AHEC partnered with the HCC Network and University of Missouri-Kansas City to facilitate a dental assistance training program and to host dental career workshops at 42 Kansas City high schools. Northwest Missouri (NWMO) and Northeast (NEMO) AHEC partnered with a local dentist (Drs. Fallon Steins and Amanda Fitzpatrick) to host a workshop and annual health educator conference. NWMO also provided funding to undergraduate pre-dental students in their communities to access free dental admission test training and NEMO showcased oral health at the regional health expo to over 400 8th graders. More is to come from other funded centers in Mid-Missouri, Southwest and Southeast Missouri AHECs.

MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.

The MAHEC partners include:

- A.T. Still University Kirksville
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- East Central Missouri ECMO AHEC – St. Louis
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- Northeast Missouri NEMO AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri NWMO AHEC – St. Joseph
- Southeastern Missouri SEMO AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwestern Missouri SWMO AHEC - Springfield
- West Central Missouri WCMO AHEC – Kansas City