



Dental Trade Alliance Foundation provides funding for pediatric oral health in Mississippi

Contact: Gretchen Mahan (601)605-6425 or msaap@integrity.com

Jackson, MS, February 25, 2008 – The Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has announced that it has received funding from the Dental Trade Alliance Foundation (DTAF) for its Pediatric Oral Health Project.

Poor oral health is a continuing problem for Mississippi's children. In 2005, a statewide random survey of 2,824 Mississippi 3rd graders revealed that 69% had tooth decay. In Mississippi, there are a number of variables that affect children's oral health. For example, the poverty rate for MS children under age 6 is 31%, compared to national rate of 21%. This risk factor alone increases the probability of young children being more at risk for poor oral health outcomes. According to Dr. Nicholas Mosca, State Dental Director for the Mississippi Department of Health and past Chairperson for the MS Oral Health Community Alliance, "Though trends show an overall improvement in oral health in the United States, profound disparities exist for poor and minority children.

Activities of this project include several activities that will ultimately improve the oral health status of young children in Mississippi. A major component of this program includes working with pediatricians to increase their participation in screening children for oral health problem and provide counseling of caregivers during clinic visits. Pediatricians will be provided educational tools and information to encourage them to incorporate this as a part of their routine services to young children. In addition, children and families will be urged to see their dental health provider by the time the child reaches one year of age. The Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University is also partnering with this project to utilize recent research to provide a summary of the current oral health conditions of Mississippi children. Research projects conducted in recent months in the MS Delta will provide the data for this research piece.

Project activities include providing funding for organizations that are currently working face to face with children in the Mississippi Delta to promote oral health through a number of educational activities with children. These efforts will include providing toothbrushes and toothpaste, visits from the tooth fairy, oral health community "fairs", dental coloring and activity books for children, and other community-level approaches. Community organizations that have received funds from this project are:

- Children's Defense Fund/SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids)
- Mississippi Action for Progress (MAP)
- Mississippi Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
- Mississippi Head Start Association

Finally, the grant will support the newly-developed MS Oral Health Community Alliance (MOHCA) in establishing itself as a non-profit organization. MOHCA is a consortium of concerned people who want to protect and promote oral health for all Mississippians. The Alliance meets every other month and through its numerous member organizations aims to promote oral health across the life span. For more information about the MOHCA, call 601/576-7500.

###

The Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 350+ primary care pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists dedicated to the health and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

This project made possible by a generous grant from the Dental Trade Alliance Foundation (DTAF). The DTAF is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the mission of promoting Access to Oral Health Care by funding research projects, resources for professional standards and productivity, and most importantly outreach and education for communities at risk. For more information about the DTAF, please email info@dtafoundation.org.