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Rhode Island Awarded Funds for Statewide Oral Health Campaign to Promote Dental Visits Among Very Young Children

Campaign to be Led by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and Team of Key Partners Representing the Rhode Island Oral Health Commission

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November 1, 2012 – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will receive \$150,000 from the DentaQuest Foundation on behalf of the Rhode Island Oral Health Commission. The funding is part of the second phase of the DentaQuest Foundation’s **Oral Health 2014 Initiative**, a national movement to address oral health disparities in the United States. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and a Leadership Team of local partners will utilize the funding to support their plan to improve the oral health of very young children in Rhode Island. Delta Dental of Rhode Island is providing matching funds in the amount of \$45,000.

Launched by the DentaQuest Foundation in 2011, the national Oral Health 2014 Initiative aims to eliminate systemic barriers that limit access to oral health care by fostering strong community partnerships committed to collective impact. During Phase 1, the Rhode Island Oral Health 2014 Initiative built multi-dimensional community partnerships, conducted a series of focus groups with providers and parents, and used the findings to develop an action plan to increase the number of young children who visit a dentist.

In Phase 2 of the multi-year Oral Health 2014 Initiative, Rhode Island will continue working to build the dental provider network to treat very young children, educate health care providers and other community organizations that serve young children and their families about the importance of early dental visits, and establish a communications campaign to build support for early dental visits among parents, dental providers, health providers and family support organizations.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has convened more than a dozen key partners to serve as members of the Initiative’s Leadership Team. Members include representatives from the Lieutenant Governor’s

Office (Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts serves as permanent Co-Chair of the Rhode Island Oral Health Commission), the American Academy of Pediatrics - RI Chapter, Delta Dental of Rhode Island, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, Providence Community Health Center WIC, RI Dental Association, RI Dental Assistants Association, RI Dental Hygienists' Association, RI Department of Health, RI Executive Office of Health and Human Services, RI Health Center Association, St. Joseph Pediatric Dental Center, Samuels Sinclair Dental Center at Rhode Island Hospital, and United Healthcare/RIte Smiles.

"The members of Rhode Island's Oral Health 2014 Leadership Team are all strong and passionate community leaders. The group has worked hard to build community support for oral health," said Ralph Fuccillo, President of the DentaQuest Foundation. "Their planning is sound. We are excited to see what develops as they engage their communities to embrace the challenge and opportunity of remediating oral health disparities in Rhode Island."

"Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is pleased to be leading this exciting statewide collaboration," stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. "All of the groups involved in this partnership are experts in their field and have contributed to the great improvements that we have made in dental care for children in our state over the past decade. We are confident that this new initiative will allow us to take our work to a new level to identify specific ways we can work together to ensure that Rhode Island's youngest children all have a dental home."

The DentaQuest Foundation will support 18 projects with funding and technical assistance. Projects in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Idaho, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia also are part of the Oral Health 2014 Initiative.

Organizations participating in the Oral Health 2014 Initiative are working with their alliances of community organizations and community leaders to address one or more of the six priority areas which have been identified by the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance:

- 1) prevention and public health infrastructure
- 2) oral health literacy (a focus of Rhode Island's work)
- 3) medical/dental collaboration (a focus of Rhode Island's work)
- 4) developing metrics for improving oral health
- 5) financing models, and
- 6) strengthening the dental care delivery system.

A distinguished National Advisory Committee of leaders in community health, philanthropy, civic engagement, and founding members of the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance provided guidance to the DentaQuest Foundation in the development of the program and the selection of grantees. The Committee members are:

- **Dr. Caswell Evans** of the University of Illinois, DentaQuest Foundation Board of Directors and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Paul Gilmer** of Triana Energy and a member of the National Community Committee of the CDC Prevention Research Centers
- **Dr. Leslie E. Grant** of the National Dental Association and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Dr. Dushanka Kleinman** of the University of Maryland School of Public Health and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors
- **Barbara Leonard** of the Maine Health Access Foundation
- **Sandra Owens Lawson** of CRP Corp.
- **Dr. Lindsey Robinson** of the California Dental Association Foundation and the U.S. National Oral Health Alliance Founding Board of Directors, and
- **Dr. Donna Shelley** of New York University School of Nursing and Dentistry.

About the DentaQuest Foundation

The DentaQuest Foundation invests in national and community-based efforts to improve oral health for all Americans through its support of prevention and access to oral health care, and through its partnerships with funders, policy makers, and community leaders. For more information, please visit www.dentaquestfoundation.org. The DentaQuest Foundation is supported by DentaQuest. DentaQuest is a leading oral health company, administering prevention-focused dental benefits to nearly 15 million individuals across the United States.

About Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.