

**To:** Rowan County Board of County Commissioners  
**From:** Nina Oliver, Public Health Director  
Elizabeth Davis, Quality Improvement Specialist  
Tykeisha Carter, Health Department Intern  
**Date:** October 3, 2016  
**Re:** Oral Health Grant

### **Situation**

The Rowan County Health Department's (RCHD) Smile Center is applying for grants to fund start up cost for oral health programs. The Smile Center is looking to fund a new initiative to provide pregnant women who are enrolled at the RCHD prenatal program, access to important dental services. Oral health is critical to overall health. Many changes that occur in pregnancy, can affect oral health. Diseases from bacteria in the mouth that develop during pregnancy can reach the fetus and contribute to negative pregnancy outcomes. A study from the Journal of Dental Education estimated that more than 18% of pre-term, low-birthrate births were a result of oral infections. Currently, 9.6% of Rowan County births are low birth-weight compared to 9.1% in North Carolina. Studies have also shown significant access to dental care disparities between minority pregnant woman and non-Hispanic white pregnant women. Black and Hispanic pregnant women were significantly less likely to receive dental care while pregnant. There is currently one other dental office in the county that accepts new patients who are pregnant. Lastly, a large portion of pregnant women do not have dental benefits. While Medicaid will cover dental in pregnant women, many do not use it, and they lose it after they give birth. By providing dental care to women who are pregnant, the Smile Center would increase the number of Rowan County women who receive prenatal dental care which can help to improve the outcomes of births in the county. We will also become the dental home for our prenatal patient's infants.

### **Background**

Rowan County Health Department's Smile Center is one of two pediatric dental clinics in Rowan County. We provide compassionate and quality dental care to children 17 and under. We also help families take steps to prevent their children from suffering future dental problems. The Smile Clinic is the main safety-net provider for the county. We continually provide valuable care for populations that are Medicaid recipients, low-income, uninsured, and vulnerable.

### **Assessment**

RCHD is applying for one (1) dental focused grant to fund our new initiative. The 2016 Foundation for a Healthy Carolina- Fall Grant Program is funded by Foundation for the Carolinas. The Foundation for a Healthy Carolina provides grants for organizations in the greater Charlotte region that are aligned with its vision of improving health, human services and educational outcomes. Healthcare grants are directed towards advancing equity and access of the community health needs of vulnerable populations. We are seeking \$18,297 to help cover 60 uninsured prenatal patients who need dental services.

## **Recommendation**

The Rowan County Health Department respectfully recommends that the Rowan County Board of Commissioners support and approve this opportunity for the Rowan County Health Department to apply for the 2016 Foundation for a Healthy Carolina - Fall Grant Program. This grant opportunity will also be brought before the Board of Health during their October 11 2016 meeting. The grant is due on October 28<sup>th</sup> 2016.