

KIDS IN NEED OF DENTISTRY: THE OLDEST DENTAL CHARITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Back in 1912, a group of Denver dentists recognized a need for affordable dental services among children of low-income miners and railroad workers, and decided to form a non-profit organization aimed at address that need. While much has changed since Kids in Need of Dentistry (KIND) opened its first clinic, its mission has not.

Today, KIND continues to provide low-cost quality, comprehensive dental care to children from low-income families. It remains the oldest dental charity in the United States.

As importantly, it is nationally recognized for its efforts to bridge the gap between public assistance and private dentistry. KIND is the first and only access program in the country to earn the endorsement of the American Dental Association and is one of only two dental charities in the country to have been endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

Services ranging from examinations and x-rays to emergency, preventive and restorative treatments are offered at three clinics in metropolitan Denver and a Colorado Springs clinic, as well as in private practices of volunteer dental professionals. KIND's services are supported by contributions from foundations, corporations and individuals. Its small staff is supplemented through a network of student and volunteer dental professionals.

Throughout its 94 years of service, KIND has never experienced a decrease in the need for its services; in fact, the need has grown. To address the growing need, it is developing plans to incorporated evidence-based prevention strategies that would reduce the number of children who would need KIND's services in the future. The key elements of the strategy includes:

- * Conducting outreach and developing partnerships with hospitals, teen pregnancy program and the WIC program to reach pregnant, disadvantaged mothers and newborn infants about ways to improve oral health for babies.

- * Provide community-based training on such matters as diet, the spread of bacteria within families and baby bottle syndrome.

- * Offer dental counseling in its clinics to teach oral hygiene at an earlier age.

For more information about KIND, its programs and plans, contact Mary Allman-Koernig, Executive Director, at 303-733-3710 or info@kindsmlles.org, or visit the KIND website at www.kindsmlles.org.

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