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Coalition Formed to Develop State's First Oral Health Plan

DENVER--Oral Health Awareness Colorado (OHAC), a coalition of federal, state and community organizations, has been formed to develop the state's first formal oral health plan aimed at improving the general health of the residents of Colorado.

The coalition also is launching a statewide public awareness campaign to heighten understanding of the importance of good oral health to general health. The comprehensive campaign, called "Be a Smart Mouth", will be targeted at all Coloradans, ranging from school children and their parents to seniors and other special populations, said Diane Brunson, director of the Oral Health Program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

Details of the health care collaborative were announced at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 10, during a briefing held at Denver Health and Hospital's Westside Community Dental Clinic.

Brunson, who was one the speakers at the briefing, said, "Our goal is to help Coloradans understand that oral health is connected to your general health. Good health begins with a smart mouth."

Brunson said the coalition had been formed, in large part, to address the burden of oral diseases in the state.

"Development of a strategic Colorado oral health plan, based on appropriate oral health needs assessment and findings at both the state and local levels, will be key to improving the health and well being of our citizens, as well as to developing future policies and actions," Brunson said.

During the upcoming months, the coalition will be seeking input from state and community leaders and organizations in the development of a state oral health plan, Brunson said. A gathering of community stakeholders, including health professionals, educators, business leaders and consumers, will be held this spring to begin the planning process.

Members of the coalition include organizations such as Mile High United Way, Girl Scouts, University of Colorado School of Dentistry and members of various dental clinics and dental insurance companies.

For more information, call (303) 692-2428.

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