

Smart Bites
Spring 2008

Oral Health Awareness Colorado!, thanks to a grant from the *Colorado Health Foundation*, has been active in advocating for oral health during the 2008 legislative session. Our primary focus is on passage of HB08-1375, known as the "long bill", which includes **over \$12 million** in federal and state funds to **increase Medicaid dental rates** under EPSDT. The bill passed the House and Senate and is now in a Committee of Conference to iron out differences on other issues.

OHAC! also supported HB08- 1116 which allows rates to be set and additional services to be added through rulemaking process to the **dental assistance program for seniors**. This important piece of legislation will improve access to needed oral health care for Colorado's most vulnerable seniors.

Even though the 2008 session is still underway, we have begun our work for the 2009 session. An initial meeting was held with a representative of the Governor's office to discuss OHAC!'s 2009 legislative agenda. We continue to advocate for the addition of an **adult dental benefit for Medicaid-** and, given Colorado's fiscal challenges, recommend that as a *first step* that comprehensive **dental coverage for pregnant women** be added to Medicaid.

OHAC! continues to collaborate with the *School of Dental Medicine* to **keep a baccalaureate dental hygiene program** in Colorado. The *School of Dental Medicine* is in the final stages of contracting with a consultant to look at options and make recommendations. OHAC! is actively seeking funding for the "next steps" of the initiative which includes convening stakeholders to review the report of the consultant and to develop recommendations for the future of the program. We are pleased to announce that the Primary Care Office of the *Colorado Department for Public Health and Environment* has awarded \$1,000.00 towards this effort.

OHAC! has two upcoming "**Community Conversations on Oral Health**" which will provide education on OHAC! activities and resources and discuss local efforts already underway to improve access to oral health care. On April 24th, Salud Family Health Center and the Health District of Northern Larimer County will co-sponsor the event in Fort Collins, and on May 8th, Eagle County Smiles will co-host the event in Edwards.

OHAC! has submitted a **grant application** to the *Colorado Health Foundation* to support three target areas: to continue our advocacy efforts in preparation for the 2009 legislative session; to facilitate the "next steps" for keeping a baccalaureate dental hygiene program in Colorado; and to identify a future direction and implement strategies to assure OHAC!'s sustainability. Notification of grant awards is in June.

Please send information or suggestions for this newsletter to Deborah Colburn at md@beasmartmouth.com