



## Washington Dental Service

Washington Dental Service is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association



## Washington Dental Service Foundation

Community Advocates for Oral Health

Dear Friends,

Washington Dental Service and Washington Dental Service Foundation are once again pleased to update you on our commitment to improving the health of Washington's residents by reducing oral disease. We carry out this commitment by offering excellent evidence-based dental benefits products and by investing in innovative ways to reduce the oral disease burden of children, families and seniors.

Despite these difficult economic times, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our communities as we work harder than ever to make quality and valued dental benefits available to as many of the citizens of Washington as possible and to continue the Foundation's work to prevent dental disease and improve access to care in our state.

As proof of our commitment, since 2008 we have dedicated nearly \$10 million to our community. Some of the highlights:

■ **Group Health Partnership** We have worked with Group Health to test the delivery of preventive oral health services (screening, risk assessment, fluoride varnish and parent education) to young children during well-child visits. Because of the success of this pilot project, Group Health will roll out these services to all of its clinics in 2010. The WDS Foundation has worked for several years to reduce dental decay by promoting prevention in the medical environment. One third of all primary care medical providers in our state have been trained to provide these services, thanks to the Foundation's work. WDS will be promoting this practice across the medical community and to all of its clients

In other areas of collaboration, Washington Dental Service is finishing a joint study with Group Health on the linkages between gum disease and diabetes and we'll be embarking on a similar study to help understand the linkages between oral health and cardiovascular disease.

■ **Early Childhood Oral Health Building** Teaming up with the University of Washington's School of Dentistry and Seattle Children's, Washington Dental Service and Washington Dental Service Foundation are investing in a new pediatric dental facility to combat childhood dental disease. The Washington Dental Service Early Childhood Oral Health building, located near Children's Hospital, is under construction and, once open, will provide services for 35,000 patients in its first year.

As health care reform is being debated, it is critical that oral health be included in a way that expands dental coverage and increases disease prevention and access to care. The growing evidence linking oral disease to other serious chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke makes it imperative that health care coverage include dental. Preventing dental disease will save money for businesses, taxpayers and families.

Inside this letter you will find more ways we are serving our community by improving oral health in Washington state.

Sincerely,

Jim Dwyer  
President & CEO  
Washington Dental Service

Laura Smith  
President & CEO  
Washington Dental Service Foundation

# Washington Dental Service and its Foundation

## *Improving oral health across Washington state.*

*Washington Dental Service Foundation focuses its work on young children and seniors and works closely with partner organizations to develop and implement innovative programs, with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention. The Foundation also advocates for policies that produce permanent changes in the way oral health services are financed and delivered.*



### **>>Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD)**

ABCD expands access to dental care for young children in Washington state by providing preventive and restorative dental services to Medicaid-enrolled children up to age 6. Local dental societies, public health agencies, state Medicaid, the University of Washington School of Dentistry and WDS Foundation have joined together to implement ABCD programs. In the last year, two new counties have been added, bringing the total number of counties with ABCD programs to 31 of Washington's 39 counties. Trained dentists have increased to 1,248, and the utilization of dental services for young Medicaid-enrolled children continues to increase, reaching 38.7 percent in 2008 (compared to 21 percent in the late 1990s.)

### **>>Early Intervention in Medical Settings**

The WDS Foundation is working to change the standard of well-child care so that dental disease prevention services are delivered at an early age at the physician's office. The Foundation delivers in-office workshops that address oral screenings, risk assessment, sharing oral health tips with parents, applying fluoride varnish to prevent or reverse early decay and referring children to dental care providers. The Foundation has now trained 1,085 pediatricians and family physicians. A pilot project with Group Health Cooperative, launched in 2007, proved to be so successful that Group Health will train all of its primary care medical providers next year to deliver preventive oral health services.

### **>>Early Learning**

To promote oral health in preschool Head Start programs, the Foundation developed a curriculum called Cavity Free Kids to help teachers, parents and children learn about tooth decay and what they can do to prevent it. Since 2000, children across the state have been learning about oral health through fun, hands-on activities. The curriculum for child care settings has now been introduced, and the WDS Foundation is building partnerships with organizations, including Thrive by Five, to ensure that children have good oral health and are ready to learn.

### **>>Community Health Centers**

Since 2000, the WDS Foundation has supported expansions of community health centers, the safety-net clinics that ensure dental care for uninsured and low-income patients. The goal is to enable community health centers to provide more visits and focus on prevention. In the last year, the WDS Foundation has invested \$932,000 in expanding the capacity of these centers, enabling more than 35,000 additional patient visits every year.

“WDS Foundation is building partnerships with organizations.”

## >>Broadening Support for Policies to Improve Oral Health

### *The Citizens' Watch campaign*

Through this campaign, the Washington Dental Service Foundation has worked to enact effective policies, generate media attention and use advertising to put a spotlight on the oral disease and its solutions. An estimated 1.6 million people heard our ads in the spring of 2009. The Citizens' Watch coalition represents dental, medical, business, labor, education, public health, and child and senior advocacy interests. Protecting and expanding dental coverage and care for all Washington citizens is a central goal.



# Improving oral health... It's what we do.

*We are passionate about creating healthy communities free from dental disease.*

### **Oral Health in Health Care Reform**

As health care reform continues to be debated in Washington, D.C., we have been working hard to remind our elected officials of the importance of having oral health included in any final package. In partnership with other Delta Dental member companies and the National Association of Dental Plans, our message has been simple: allow stand-alone dental plans to continue to do what we do best by providing the highest-quality plans, highest customer satisfaction and most innovative dental coverage to our customers in order to improve overall health.

Policymakers are starting to pay attention, and we are hopeful that if there is passage of health care reform in the near future, oral health and standalone dental plans will play an important part.

You simply cannot be healthy without oral health. Here are some reasons why:

- Severe tooth decay and gum infections require expensive treatment and can cause extensive pain.
- Infection can enter the body through the mouth and cause life-threatening complications.
- Ninety percent of systemic diseases can be detected in the mouth.
- Dental-related diseases are associated with diabetes, heart disease, stroke and pneumonia.
- More than 7,000 people, mostly older Americans, die each year from oral and pharyngeal cancers. This year alone, about 30,000 new cases of oral cancer will be diagnosed.

“You simply cannot be healthy without oral health.”

## The Need for Prevention is NOW!

**The Bad News** > Children who don't receive preventive care early in life have dental costs 60 percent higher than those whose oral health is treated and cared for. As a result of neglected care, millions of work and school hours are lost each year due to dental issues. Workers lose 164 million hours of work time annually, and children miss 51 million hours (one million days) of school each year.

Oral health is a critical component of overall health and should not be ignored — by the general public or by health care reform. Americans have rightly identified health care as a central issue that must be tackled by this administration. Washington Dental Service is fighting to keep oral health an important component of reform legislation.

**The Good News** > Dental disease is preventable. Through early intervention, preventive dental visits, effective home care, and healthy nutrition and eating habits, children, families and seniors can have good oral health.

At Washington Dental Service and Washington Dental Service Foundation, we are working to make certain that prevention and early treatment of oral disease — for all generations, ethnicities and races — are community priorities.

# Who we are and what we do...

## Washington Dental Service — at a glance

Washington Dental Service and Washington Dental Service Foundation are not-for-profit organizations with a mutual mission — advancing oral health.

At Washington Dental Service, our strength as a company, our exceptional growth and our fiscal discipline support the WDS Foundation. Our Foundation's investments drive strategic changes in systems to improve oral health and create healthier communities.

As a company, we continue to offer a value proposition unlike other dental benefits carriers — and it shows:

- Washington Dental Service has added more than 370 new employer groups since January of this year and more than 30,000 new subscribers. In all, WDS provides coverage to more than 2.25 million people nationwide.
- Washington Dental Service has the largest network of dentists — more than 3,800 locally and more than 131,000 nationally through our affiliation with the Delta Dental Plans Association. That's nearly nine out of 10 dentists statewide and approximately three out of four nationwide.
- We consistently rank highest in customer satisfaction, showing consistent customer retention rates year after year.
- As the nation's pioneer of dental benefits, we have a 55-year history of providing excellence in oral health coverage.

*Unless otherwise noted, statistics based on WDS records.*



*WDS is a proud sponsor of the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association.*



## >> In the News

This fall, Washington Dental Service participated in two community walks benefiting the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes Association. As a sponsor of these events, WDS is committed to educating the community about the importance of oral health and overall health. Research shows that more than 90 percent of all systemic diseases — including heart disease — have oral symptoms. By educating people about the link between oral and overall health, including warning signs inside the mouth, we can help save lives.

“WDS is committed to educating the community about the importance of oral health and overall health.”