



College of Dentistry  
Community Dentistry and Behavioral Science

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January 3, 2022

City of Gainesville – Procurement Division  
Project Name: Urgent Care Facility in Gainesville, FL  
Project Number: CMGR-220029-DH

Letter of Interest: Dental Care for Residents in Zip Codes 32609 and 32641

To Whom It May Concern:

The University of Florida College of Dentistry Department of Community Dentistry and Behavioral Science is interested in partnering with the City of Gainesville to increase access to dental care for residents in the 32609 and 32641 zip codes. Our proposed project, the Saving Smiles Program, would provide free comprehensive dental services to children and adolescents through the development of an extramural clinical rotation site at the Fearnside Family Services Center, located at 3600 NE 15th Street, Gainesville, FL 32609.

Since 2003, our department has provided a variety of dental services to the Alachua County community. The Saving Smiles Program began in July 2020 with the goal of addressing the increasingly high prevalence of untreated tooth decay in Alachua County's children as observed by our department's annual county-wide oral health surveillance program. As of Fall 2021, 40% of third grade students in Alachua County Public Schools had evidence of dental cavities. This prevalence is even greater in schools located on the eastern part of the county. At Metcalfe Elementary (zip code 32609), 74% of third graders presented with untreated tooth decay; at Idylwild Elementary (zip code 32641), 56% of third graders had signs of tooth decay. If left untreated, tooth decay can lead to pain, severe infection, trouble eating, and poor school performance. On average, 12% of third grade students attending public elementary schools in the 32609 and 32641 zip codes during Fall 2021 had dental needs that would be classified as urgent.

The Saving Smiles Program is currently held every 6 weeks in conjunction with our department's other oral health promotion programs, including our school-based dental sealant program and Head Start fluoride varnish program. It is overseen by a full-time clinical dental faculty member and a part-time dental hygienist coordinator. The Saving Smiles Program is unique in that it utilizes state-of-the-art portable dental equipment that can be set up in most indoor spaces. More importantly, this program addresses the primary barriers for many families in accessing dental care: cost (Alachua County Community Health Needs Assessment 2020). Since the program began, we have held transient clinical events at various locations including Gainesville Housing Authority Properties, Library Partnership, and Hawthorne Baptist Church. While these locations are ideal for reaching our target population, they do not have available space to accommodate our program equipment for extended periods of time. The Fearnside Family Services Center currently contains unused clinical

space that would be optimal for the integration of the Saving Smiles Program along with other health services as part of the City of Gainesville Urgent Care Facility Project.

With a more permanent location for the Saving Smiles Program at the Fearnside Family Services Center, our proposal would involve expanding the program to become a weekly extramural clinical rotation site for University of Florida College of Dentistry senior dental students, currently with a class size of 93 students. Each week of the Spring, Summer, and Fall semesters, two dental students would serve as clinicians to provide quality comprehensive dental care to pediatric patients under faculty supervision. In addition to offering a wide range of dental treatments, clinicians would provide culturally competent, family-centered oral health education to improve dental home care between clinic visits. This expansion of the Saving Smiles Program through the creation of an extramural clinical rotation site would not only increase the number of patients seen and number of services delivered, but would also provide invaluable service-learning opportunities for the next generation of oral health care providers.

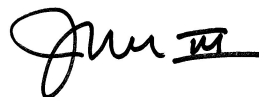
Our department is requesting funds for increased clinical staffing to support the expansion of the Saving Smiles Program. This would include salary support for a part-time general dentist who would treat patients and supervise senior dental students on rotation, along with salary support for our current dental hygienist coordinator to account for increased effort concurrent with program growth. Funding for program supplies is currently sustained through billing Medicaid for any treatment provided to Medicaid-insured patients. All patients, regardless of whether they have dental insurance, are seen in our program and receive care free of charge. Patients are recruited via advertising by our community partners as well as through our prevention-focused outreach programs in Alachua County Public Schools. Our department has a robust network of volunteers including undergraduate pre-dental students who can provide clinical and administrative assistance as needed. The Saving Smiles Program received initial funding from the Children's Trust of Alachua County for salary support for our part-time dental hygienist program coordinator, and we continue to look for additional funding sources when applicable. All major program equipment, a cargo van, and initial supplies were purchased in 2020 through support from the Rotary Club of Gainesville.

The University of Florida College of Dentistry Department of Community Dentistry and Behavioral Science is committed to promoting optimal oral health through education, disease prevention, and elimination of health disparities. Through our proposed program expansion and partnership with the City of Gainesville, we hope to enhance the dental and overall health of the most vulnerable members of our community. We look forward to the opportunity to provide additional details on program implementation as part of this integrated community effort.

Sincerely,



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