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MDAC RELEASES 5-YEAR ROADMAP TO IMPROVED ORAL HEALTH IN MARYLAND

(COLUMBIA, MD - March 8, 2018) – The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC) has released the Maryland Oral Health Plan 2018-2023 (MOHP), a five-year roadmap to improved oral health for all Marylanders. The plan builds on the oral health improvements achieved since the release of the first state plan in 2011, identifies critical remaining gaps, and outlines strategies to expand access to oral health care, prevent oral disease and injury, and improve the oral health and overall health of all Marylanders.

Since the issuance of the first plan in 2011, the collective efforts of MDAC and its members, partners and oral health stakeholders statewide have made Maryland a model for the nation in improving the oral health of its children. Although dental caries is the most chronic disease of children and adolescents, improved access to oral health care through the Medicaid program, preventive programs such as dental sealants, and statewide oral health literacy campaigns have improved the oral health status of Maryland’s children. The vast majority of Maryland’s public school children have no unmet dental treatment needs, and less than 1% have any type of urgent need. The state now meets or exceeds Healthy People 2020 national targets.

The updated plan notes the need to do the same for adults. Too many Maryland adults face serious financial obstacles to obtaining dental care, which puts many of our most vulnerable citizens at risk of untreated pain and serious health issues. The single most important step to improve the oral health of Maryland adults is a Medicaid program that covers dental services for adults. MDAC and its coalition partners strongly support Maryland Senate Bill 284, sponsored by Senators Thomas “Mac” Middleton (D-Charles County) and Guy Guzzone (D-Howard County), which would add a basic adult dental benefit to Medicaid and enable adults to establish a dental home, obtain preventative dental care, and avert costly chronic dental conditions.

“Oral health is a part of overall health” said MDAC Executive Director Mary Backley. “Oral health affects systemic health, including conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Oral health also affects quality of life – our ability to eat, speak and be pain free. The goals outlined in the Maryland Oral Health Plan are critical steps forward to improve the oral health – and overall health – of Marylanders of all ages and enable them to lead happy, healthy and productive lives.”

The Maryland Oral Health Plan is financially supported by the Maryland Department of Health.

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About MDAC: The Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC), the state’s leading non-governmental oral health policy and advocacy organization, works to improve the oral health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care. MDAC leads the development of the five-year Maryland Oral Health Plan and partners with individuals and organizations working to develop and implement initiatives to improve the oral health of all Marylanders.

FAST FACTS ON THE MARYLAND ORAL HEALTH PLAN 2018-2023

The Maryland Oral Health Plan, 2018-2023 outlines 11 oral health goals in three key areas:

Access to oral health care:

- All Maryland children have comprehensive dental insurance coverage through public (Medicaid/MCHP) or private insurance.
- All Maryland adults have comprehensive dental insurance coverage through Medicaid or private insurance.
- All Maryland residents have a dental home.
- Strengthen the oral health safety net provider system.
- Integrate the oral health care system within the medical health care system.

Oral disease and injury prevention:

- Use data to advance optimal oral health for all Marylanders.
- Improve public awareness of oral disease and injury prevention.
- Promote community-based oral disease and injury prevention programs.

Oral health literacy and education:

- Increase understanding of the relationship between oral health and overall health, and promote good oral health practices and access to oral health care.
- Improve collaboration between oral health and other health and human services providers so that patients understand how to navigate the oral health care system and establish a dental home.
- Educate medical professionals and students about the importance of the oral/systemic connection and foster collaboration between medical and dental disciplines and communities.

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