



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2014 January 16

CHANGES TO ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 007-14 re Changes to Oral Health Programs be received for information.

Key Points

- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is proposing the integration of all publicly-funded oral health programs under one program which is similar to the current Healthy Smiles Ontario program.
- The new program will have less restrictive financial requirements and will compensate providers using more consistent fee schedules with claims paid by a third-party who will be determined via a request for proposal process.
- The implications of the announced changes for health units is currently being assessed and clarified.

Introduction

On December 16, 2013, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) announced several changes to Oral Health Programs. The communication from the MOHLTC is provided in [Appendix A](#). A summary of the proposed changes and their implications are outlined in this Board of Health report.

Proposed Changes

- 1) **Integration of Programs:** Six publicly-funded children's dental programs will be integrated into one under the name "Healthy Smiles Ontario". The six programs are the current Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) program, Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT), Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program, Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities, and preventive services within the Ontario Public Health Standards. The integrated programs will be administered jointly with a common fee schedule and entitlements which would include both preventive (e.g. cleanings, sealants, fluoride) and treatment (e.g. fillings, extractions etc.) services.

The income cut-off for eligible families to participate in the new integrated "Healthy Smiles Ontario" program will be raised from the current net family income of \$20,000, to an amount that is indexed to family size. For a family with one child the adjusted family net income cut-off level will be \$21,513. It is estimated that the raised cut-off level will allow approximately an additional 70,000 children less than 18 years of age across the province to participate in the program. This change will take effect in April 2014.

- 2) **Claims Management:** Management of claims from dentists who see clients under the new "Healthy Smiles Ontario" program will be processed by a central claims management process. The provider of this service will be determined by a request for proposal process and is expected to be in place by August 2015. Currently claims are managed by a variety of sources including by local health units.

- 3) **Coverage for Children Whose Family Income Exceed Cut-off levels:** Provision of services for children who have urgent dental needs, but whose family income exceeds the cut-off level and still cannot afford care, is under consideration. Currently these children would be covered under the Children in Need of Treatment Program. The provision of preventive services for children whose family income level exceeds the cut-off level but cannot afford this service has yet to be determined. Currently this service is provided at no cost at the Health Unit's 50 King Street office.

Implications for the Middlesex-London Health Unit

The implications of these proposed changes to the Oral Health Programs are not totally clear but possible implications include the following:

- 1) **Changes to Claims Management:** Currently the Health Unit assesses and pays claims from local dentists for services they provide under the Children in Need of Treatment program, Healthy Smiles Ontario program, and Ontario Works for Middlesex County. The centralized claims management process would eliminate the need for the Health Unit to perform these claims management functions.
- 2) **Preventive Services:** Currently the Health Unit provides preventive services (cleanings, sealants and fluoride) for children who are not eligible for other programs but cannot afford dental care. The provision of this service under the new system is currently unclear.

Next Steps

The province has indicated that they intend to work closely with health units as they sort through the implementation and implications of the proposed changes. Health Unit staff member will be actively engaged in this process to ensure that oral health needs of local residents will continue to be met.

This report was prepared by Dr. Bryna Warshawsky, Associate Medical Officer of Health; Dr. Chimere Okoronkwo, Manager, Oral Health; and Dr. Maria VanHarten, Dental Consultant.



Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and CEO

This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Child Health
