

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care****Ministère de la Santé
et des Soins de longue durée**

Chief Medical Officer of Health

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DEC 16 2013

MEMORANDUM

To: Medical Officers of Health, Board Chairs and CEOs

Re: Ontario to Expand Eligibility and Improve Access to Dental Programs for Low-Income Children and Youth

Dear Colleagues,

As part of Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care to provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place and in support of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, I'm pleased to inform you of today's government announcement to expand eligibility and improve access to dental programs, making it easier for more children and youth to receive timely dental care.

The province will integrate six publicly-funded dental programs currently provided through Healthy Smiles Ontario, the Children In Need Of Treatment program, Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program, Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities and preventive services within the *Ontario Public Health Standards, 2008*, into one seamless program for children and youth aged 17 and under from low-income families, beginning August 2015.

The new program will provide eligible children with:

- a simplified enrolment and renewal process;
- access to the full range of dental services, from preventive care such as cleanings and fluoride treatments to basic care such as fillings, extractions and X-rays;
- dental coverage for a full year.

The new program will also streamline administration and delivery of services, reducing confusion for families looking to access care. Children of social assistance recipients will be automatically enrolled into the new dental program, while all other low-income families will be able to apply through a simplified and more streamlined application process.

The province will also increase access to oral health services such as cleanings, diagnostic services and basic treatment by expanding eligibility for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program, starting in April 2014. The current financial eligibility threshold will be increased, and will vary according to the number of children in the family.

For municipal social assistance delivery agents and boards of health, the new program will result in a reduced administrative burden, allowing more time to be spent with clients on direct service delivery. We plan to actively engage with you to better understand the impact of the new program

on your day-to-day business and to ensure that this program is designed in a way that best meets the needs of clients and their families.

To assist the Ministry with this work, we'll be engaging you more extensively in the coming months to help shape the program's implementation and ongoing operation. We will also be establishing an ongoing program advisory group comprised of delivery partners to help ensure that this engagement is continuous and that your input is included every step of the way. I will also provide additional details on this initiative at the CMOH/MOH teleconference on December 19, 2013.

The new integrated program demonstrates the commitment of the Ontario government to reduce poverty, reduce inequities and increase access to oral health care in Ontario. We all recognize and agree that good oral health is important to overall health including playing a role in preventing chronic disease. I truly believe this program will go a long way to improve the oral health and overall health of Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth.

Thank you for your continuous partnership and collaboration to improve the oral health of Ontario's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arlene King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end.

Dr. Arlene King
Chief Medical Officer of Health

- cc. Kate Manson-Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Promotion Division, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Roselle Martino, Executive Director, Public Health Division, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Elizabeth Walker, Director, Public Health Planning and Liaison Branch, Public Health Division, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care