

May 28, 2018

Mr. Richard Whitley
Director of Health and Human Services
4126 Technology Way Suite 100
Carson City, NV 89706-2009

Dear Mr. Whitley,

It has come to our attention that there are many changes taking place within the State Oral Health Program; foremost, the elimination of the State Public Health Dental Hygienist position, currently held by Judy White RDH, is scheduled to be effective July 1, 2018. Additionally, the program is being shifted from chronic disease to community service, the Dental Officer will be primarily focused on Medicaid and the oral health program manager position will be moved under the office of data and epidemiology.

This is very concerning as the State Dental Officer and the State Public Health Dental Hygienist are key positions that promote, improve and protect the oral health of all Nevadans and are provided for in NRS 439.272.

We feel the loss of the State Public Dental Hygienist position and the impact it will have on the Nevada Oral Health Program. It should be noted that during the brief 18 month period that these positions has been funded and filled with qualified professionals, the oral health program has been able to accomplish: establishing the framework for multiple rural oral health out-reach collaborative projects, completion a statewide Basic Screening Survey (BSS) of Head Start programs - that is now in the analysis stage, successful technical assistance to School Sealant programs, representation of Nevada at the National Oral Health conference, as well as developing assessment tools for assessing our elder population. Assessment and data analysis are needed for grant applications and they are vital elements of our state oral health reporting. The collaboration between the Nevada State Dental Health Officer and the State Public Health Dental Hygienist position will be lost. It has taken both current Oral Health Program positions working in Northern and Southern Nevada to make the progress that has been made in such a short amount of time.

This change came as a surprise because at the May 3, 2018 meeting of the Advisory Committee on the State Program for Oral Heal (AC4OH), stakeholders

across the state were assured that the funding and support for the Oral Health Program was a priority to the State. At no time did Duane Young mention that there would be budget cuts or eliminations of positions within the program. At this same meeting Dr. Capurro announced that the Oral Health Program had submitted a grant application to the CDC for a 5-year grant that will be awarded to states sometime in September of 2018. I am concerned about the stability of the remaining Nevada State Dental Health Officer position if funding continues to be an issue. With the carve out of dental and a new dental Medicaid provider Liberty oversight is important to success of the dental program. The additional goals of the Oral Health Program in addition to Medicaid oversight could be compromised due to lack of manpower to help in administrative as well as clinical issues.

Studies are clear about the relationship between oral and systemic health. As members of the Community Coalition of Oral Health in Southern Nevada we represent over a hundred years of oral health expertise. This group has volunteered their time to work tirelessly to ensure that the Dental Officer and the State Public Health Dental Hygienist positions were finally funded after 14 years of being an unfunded mandate of law.

The decisions to cut funding cannot be easy. It is also not easy to see Nevadans who need our help to better their quality of life by relieving dental pain. I have worked in the dental field for 34 years working to educate a diverse population about dental care. When you take time to educate and do outreach you can make a difference. The Community Coalition for Oral Health members work every day to make an impact to help others through dental care and education. I am asking you to help us maintain the Oral Health Program in Nevada so we can be recognized on a national stage for our progress.

Sincerely,

Cathie Davenport
Chair Community Coalition for Oral Health
Nevada Dental Association
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