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## **Oral Health Alliance Aims to Improve Dental Care for State's Most Vulnerable Children**

**February 11, 2015 (West Palm Beach, FL)** – Florida faces systemic barriers to dental care access and utilization for the 1.28 million children who are covered by Medicaid. In fact, Florida is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the number of Medicaid-covered children who saw a dentist in 2011.

To address this problem, the Florida Institute for Health Innovation (FIHI) is bringing together a cadre of partners with an interest in improving the oral health of Florida's most vulnerable children to form the Florida Oral Health Alliance. Comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders from multiple sectors, the Florida Oral Health Alliance will work together to advance public-private partnerships to improve dental care for Medicaid-eligible children in the state of Florida.

With seed funding from the DentaQuest Foundation, and using a data-driven, results-based leadership model for change, the Institute will facilitate, plan and implement strategies for the Alliance, based on the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders including dental and health care providers, legal services, child advocates, human services, philanthropy, the safety net and the members of the communities they serve.

"The Institute's model of collaborative leadership has been used throughout the country to successfully create large-scale systems change," said Roderick King, MD, MPH, CEO of the Florida Institute for Health Innovation. "We've demonstrated that healthy communities are created when leaders take aligned actions for results and measurable change." Additionally, this model has been used to address infant mortality in Baltimore, Maryland, poverty eradication in Savannah, Georgia, early childhood school readiness in Baltimore, MD and Connecticut, as well as to improve the health and well-being of children and families in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

To ensure that community-level barriers are understood and addressed, the Institute will develop a statewide community advisory council made up of individuals and groups that experience challenges to accessing and utilizing dental care. The advisory council will inform the strategy recommendations for improved oral health education and dental care delivery.

### **What our partners are saying:**

“As part of *Florida’s Action for Dental Health*, an FDA-wide effort to address obstacles to dental care in Florida, we are pleased to announce a collaborative effort with FIHI who will convene stakeholders with vested interest in serving more children covered by Medicaid,” said Richard Stevenson, DDS, President of the Florida Dental Association.

“We are proud to be a partner of the Florida Oral Health Alliance,” noted Andy Behrman, President and CEO of the Florida Association of Community Health Centers. “We believe the Alliance will improve access to quality health services by bringing together agencies, legislators and others with the desire to make real changes to our dental health care delivery system.”

“Social problems are best addressed when community members and key stakeholders work to collectively address large-scale issues like access to health care,” said Eric Kelly, President of the Quantum Foundation, a private grantmaking organization which supports health care projects, and a partner who will work to align Alliance resources for maximized oral health outcomes.

“Supporting the essential efforts of the Florida Oral Health Alliance strengthens our impact on improving the oral health of underserved individuals and families,” stated Steven Marcus, Ed.D, President and CEO of the Health Foundation of South Florida. “Through our working relationships and collaborative efforts, we strive to ensure that South Florida residents have access to oral health services in their neighborhoods.”

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### **About the Florida Institute for Health Innovation**

*The Florida Institute for Health Innovation (FIHI), formerly known as the Florida Public Health Institute, is one of several sister public health institutes throughout the United States. FIHI is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that improves community health through innovation and collaborative change. FIHI believes that today’s health challenges require a new way of working based on shared leadership, aligning root causes and strategy and measureable results. FIHI believes that innovative collaborations produce innovative solutions for healthier communities. A nonprofit public health institute, FIHI facilitates data-driven, results-based collaborative action, conducts community-focused research and evaluation, and provides impartial analysis of policy health impacts. To learn more, visit [www.flhealthinnovation.org](http://www.flhealthinnovation.org).*

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