



# Allegany County Health Department

*"Promoting Health and Preventing Disease"*



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## ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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### **ACHD AWARDED GRANT TO EXPAND ADULT DENTAL SERVICES TO UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS Program Aims to Improve Access to Care, Decrease Unnecessary ED Visits**

CUMBERLAND, MD – The Allegany County Health Department was recently named as one of 17 grant recipients by the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC), receiving a \$100,000 grant to expand adult dental services and improve the ability of the health department to respond to the dental emergency needs of adults going to the hospital Emergency Department.

“Through the funding provided by this grant opportunity, our safety net dental clinic staff will be able to put into place a system that will increase access to care for many underserved adults and reduce avoidable emergency department utilization,” stated Dr. Gretchen Seibert, Dental Health Director at the Allegany County Health Department. “Our plan is to build the capacity of our safety net dental clinic and leverage community-hospital partnerships to address the oral health needs of low income adults with limited access to care.”

In collaboration with community partners including Western Maryland Health System, Allegany Health Right, and the Human Resources Development Commission, the health department aims to decrease the number of ED visits for emergency dental treatment by expanding access to alternative resources for eligible adults. The grant program will also connect patients to care coordination staff who can help them enroll in Maryland Medicaid or Affordable Care Act coverages if needed.

“The goal of this start-up initiative, made possible through the CHRC grant award, is for this program to become self-sustaining by the end of the grant period, which begins May 1, 2017 and ends September 30, 2018,” said Patrick Panuska, ACHD Deputy Health Officer. “This will allow us to create a system that will increase access to care for many underserved adults and reduce avoidable emergency department utilization for many years to come.”

In announcing the grant award, Maryland CHRC Executive Director Mark Luckner commended the program and its projected impact on health outcomes for at-risk adults in the county.

*[more]*

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"The Commission congratulates the Allegany Health Department for developing this successful grant proposal," Luckner said. "This project will go a long way towards expanding access to dental services for underserved residents in Allegany County."

The CHRC's request for proposals this year generated 77 proposals. The Commission awarded 17 grants totaling \$4 million throughout the state of Maryland. To date, the CHRC has awarded 35 grants totaling \$7 million to increase access to dental services, specifically. These programs have collectively served more than 52,000 Marylanders. In addition to the dental grant to Allegany Health Department, the CHRC has also funded recent dental programs implemented by Allegany Health Right.

The Maryland Community Health Resources Commission was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 2005 to expand access to health care for low-income Marylanders and underserved communities in the state and bolster Maryland's health care safety net infrastructure. The CHRC is an independent commission within the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DHMH), and its 11 members are appointed by the Governor. In creating the CHRC, the Maryland General Assembly recognized the need to have an independent commission that focuses on building capacity in Maryland's network of safety net providers and expands access in underserved communities of the state.

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