



DELTA DENTAL
FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



A LETTER FROM OUR **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Delta Dental Foundation's (DDF) Annual Report highlights the impact we and our community partners achieved across our four strategic aims: access to care, workforce development, education and advocacy.

From equipping mobile dentistry programs that bring preventive services directly into schools, community centers and senior housing, to supporting safety-net clinics that expand care for underserved families, we continued to remove barriers and strengthen local oral health systems.

We also invested deeply in the people who make care possible. Through scholarships, loan repayment programs and training opportunities, we helped cultivate a diverse and equity-driven oral health workforce—one that reflects and understands the communities it serves.

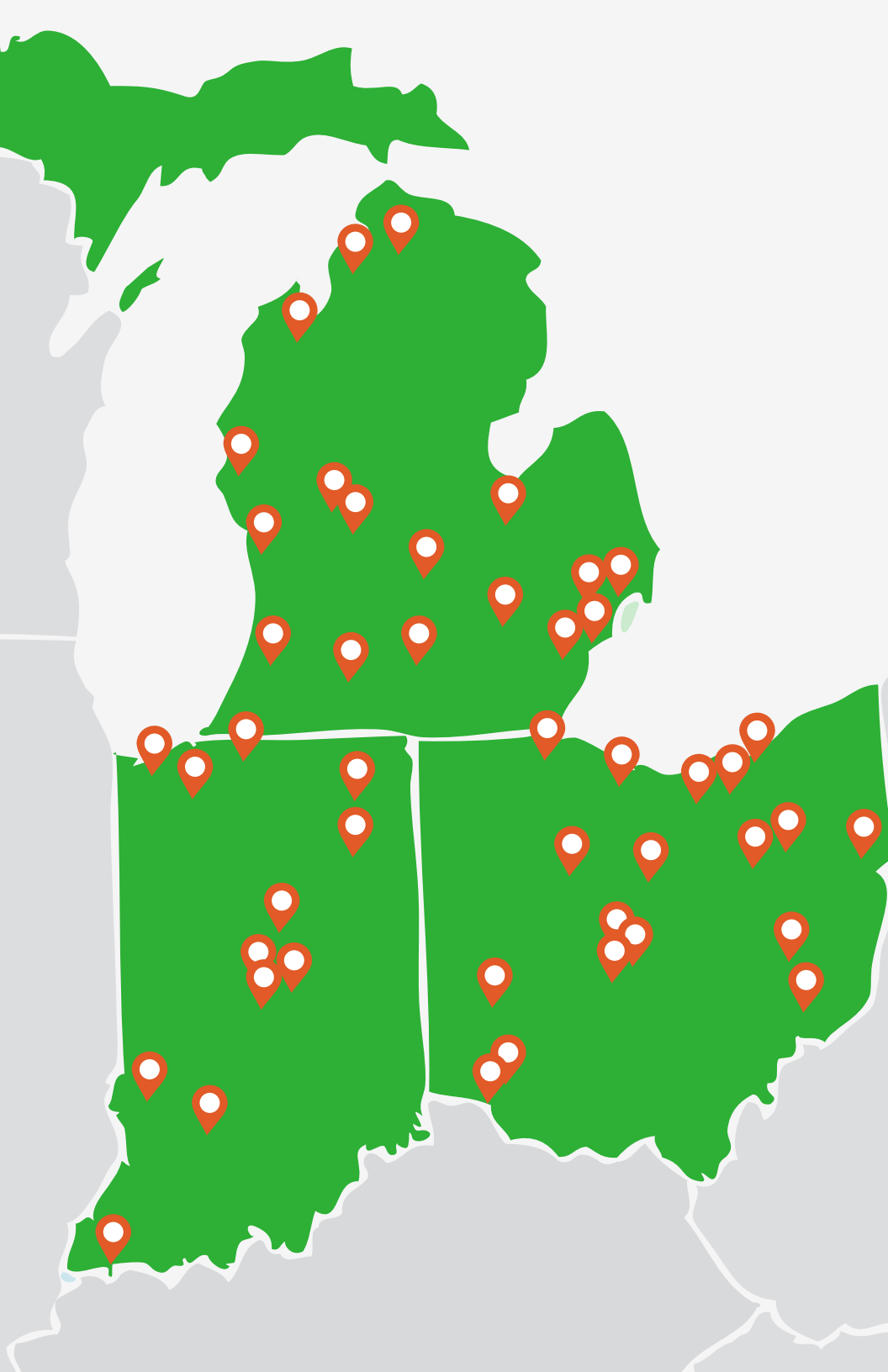
Our ongoing support for inclusive dentistry training and for programs that empower leaders at community health centers underscores our belief that sustainable change requires both people and infrastructure.

Thank you to our partners, grantees and supporters. Your commitment fuels our progress—and together, we are building healthier, more equitable communities across Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and beyond.

Yours in health,

Holli Seabury, EdD
Executive Director





OUR COMMUNITIES

In 2025, we committed more than **\$6.4 million** in grants, scholarships, loan repayment, sponsorships and educational resources, impacting more than **2.6 million** lives in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and beyond.



\$6.4 million in contributions impacting more than 2.6 million lives

For a full list of the grants the DDF awarded in 2025, please visit our [Recently Approved Grants and Funding Initiatives page](#).

ORAL HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS



464,084

Brochures, flyers and posters distributed



348,873

Toothbrushes donated



104,228

Tubes of toothpaste donated



30,678

Containers of floss donated



21

Centers of Inclusive Dentistry locations



54

Organizations received more than \$350,000 through the Community Mini-grants Program



7

Dentists practicing at nonprofit dental clinics received \$175,000 in loan repayment



11

Hygienists practicing at nonprofit dental clinics received \$55,000 in loan repayment



35

Dental hygiene students received nearly \$350,000 to support the cost of attendance

FUNDING BREAKDOWN BY STRATEGIC AIM



55.5%

Access to Care



34.5%

Workforce Development



9%

Oral Health Education



1%

Advocacy

Access to Care

We will improve access for people and communities that experience barriers to dental care by expanding the number and type of access points.

- \$1,189,294 in total funding
- 98,536 lives impacted
- At least 54 new access points, including mobile dentistry, school-based clinics, care events, transportation to care, Centers for Inclusive Dentistry and direct service locations



Mobile dentistry expands care in Michigan

Whether it's a Chrysler Pacifica filled with portable equipment or a 39-foot-long dental RV, mobile units are helping reduce barriers to care by delivering services directly to the Michigan residents who need them most.

That Chrysler Pacifica was the Health Department of Northwest Michigan's ticket to expanding services.

"It really helped me scale with sustainability," says Dawn Marie Strehl, regional oral health supervisor for the department. "We pack it up. Two seats for the team, the rest full of sealant equipment, and we set a classroom up like a dental office."

She and her team work on several oral health programs targeting seniors and children, including conducting screenings under the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment program. Their dental van lets them take their services on the road, providing essential preventive care at schools and other community settings.

Along with Strehl, hygienists Elisa Dack, at District Health Department #2 in the Northeast, and Deanna Alexander, with Hygiene on Wheels in metro Detroit, are using similar vans—each funded by the DDF—to reach children, seniors, and families who struggle to get to traditional clinics.

Many community health centers, such as Great Lakes Bay Health Centers (GLBHC), also deploy mobile units to better serve their patients. Last year, the DDF granted funding to GLBHC for another dental bus, which will be the sixth unit to join the Smiles Are Everywhere fleet.

"Without our mobile dental program, many children would go without needed dental services and treatment," says Dr. Paul Crowley, chief dental officer, GLBHC.

During the 2024-25 school year, more than 6,000 students at 200 schools received care onboard a GLBHC dental bus—an impact that continues to grow with every stop.

When school isn't in session, the GLBHC buses travel throughout lower Michigan to provide dental care to agricultural workers and their families, along with people living in senior housing and shelters. If patients need follow-up care, they're referred to one of GLBHC's brick-and-mortar locations to receive treatment and establish a permanent dental home.

In 2025, the DDF granted nearly \$690,000 to fund mobile units—or programs that deploy them, such as SEAL! Michigan—that offer preventive care at schools, community centers, senior centers and more. All told, these programs estimate reaching nearly 50,000 Michigan residents.

Why it matters

Funding mobile dental programs is one way to create new places where people can access care. When a mobile unit pulls up to a school or community center, no one needs to worry about finding transportation, arranging childcare or taking time off work. These mobile dental units deliver preventive care where it's needed most.

Access to Care

We will improve access for people and communities that experience barriers to dental care by funding the development and equipping of safety-net dental clinics.

- \$2,381,885 in total funding
- 146,030 lives impacted
- 48 equipment grants
- 5 new clinics
- 29 new operatories



School-based health center will provide new access point, opportunities for oral health learning

In 2025, Campbell City School District in Ohio received \$200,000 to equip an eight-chair school-based dental clinic at the Mahoning Valley Wellness and Rehabilitation Center (MVWRC).

The clinic will not only provide crucial dental care—it will also serve as a learning hub for dental hygiene students at Youngstown State University and dental students at NEOMED (also former grant recipients).

MVWRC will also partner with a local program, The Purple Cat, for adults with disabilities and a K-12 school for students with autism. Two of the eight dental operatories will be enclosed and designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities or other sensory issues.

Although construction is ongoing, the district reports that MVWRC will be its second facility providing whole-child, whole-family, and whole-community services.

Why it matters

One way that we help improve access for people and communities that experience barriers to care is by funding the development of and equipping safety-net dental clinics. MVWRC will also help educate the next generation of oral health professionals in a community-based setting, ideally preparing them for careers in nonprofit dental clinics or other underserved communities.



SPOTLIGHT ON STRATEGIC AIMS

Workforce Development

Developing and supporting programs that encourage people from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue careers in oral health.

- \$433,288 in total funding
- 15,466 lives impacted



HealthLinc grows its own dental assisting team

HealthLinc, a Federally Qualified Health Center in Valparaiso, Indiana, understands the value of growing its own workforce—specifically, dental assistants.

Since 2021, HealthLinc's dental assistant training program has employed an “earn-while-you-learn” approach, providing participants with full-time jobs during training and offering ongoing employment at HealthLinc clinics after program completion.

Upon enrollment, each dental assistant signs a two-year agreement, committing to work at HealthLinc clinics post-graduation in exchange for tuition waivers and program materials, which include CPR certification, immunizations, scrub sets, fees for the DANB radiology exam and Indiana Dental Radiology license and other equipment.

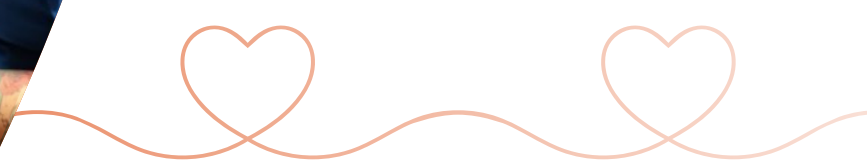
The program spans four months, including 288 externship hours with lectures and practical experience. Participants spend 24 hours each week onsite at a HealthLinc clinic and attend 16 hours of lectures and skills practice, supervised by a HealthLinc dental instructor, at their new corporate training center.

“In just a few weeks of being in the program, I've already gained valuable skills and confidence, knowing I can become a great dental assistant. This experience feels like a step closer to my dream of becoming a dental hygienist,” says Jaedyn Benning, a recent graduate of the program. “I'm so grateful for this incredible, debt-free opportunity, and I am excited to continue growing with an organization that feels like family.”

Last year, HealthLinc received a \$10,000 Community Mini-Grant to support the program.

Why it matters

This program helps more people from underrepresented backgrounds pursue careers in oral health—a key component of our strategic plan.



Workforce Development

Establishing and supporting new models of care, such as dental therapy.

- \$275,000 in total funding
- 203 lives impacted
- 2 practicing dental therapists



Michigan licenses its first dental therapist

In September 2025, Dana Obey became Michigan's first licensed dental therapist, with the help of a scholarship funded by the Michigan Primary Care Association, DDF and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund.

She and two others—Jamie Toney and Vanessa Cushman—studied at Skagit Valley College in Washington, one of the few CODA-accredited dental therapy programs in the United States.

Dental therapy is a licensed profession, similar to nurse practitioners or physician assistants in medicine, focused on essential services such as fillings, basic extractions, preventive care and patient education.

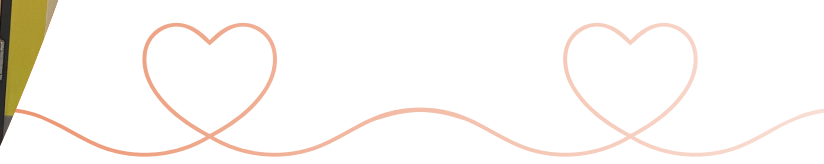
Although Michigan lawmakers approved dental therapy in 2018, it took several years to establish a path to licensure and Medicaid reimbursement. In addition, there are no dental therapy programs in Michigan, which means that anyone who wants to pursue a degree in dental therapy must travel out of state to do so.

Obey, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is currently practicing at Bay Mills Health Center in Brimley, Michigan.



Why it matters

Supporting new models of care, such as dental therapy, is one way we aim to strengthen the oral health safety net, increase professional satisfaction and improve access to care—especially in places where dental professionals are scarce.



Workforce Development

Developing and supporting programs that train providers in an equity-based approach to care.

- \$854,840 in total funding
- 1,840 lives impacted
- 73 new CID providers
- 21 total CID locations



Centers for Inclusive Dentistry program expands to 21 locations

The DDF's Centers for Inclusive Dentistry (CID) program continues to provide free, immersive training, sensory-friendly tools and other resources to help clinics across Michigan, Ohio and Indiana provide the best-possible care for patients with disabilities.

"Oral health is critical for people with disabilities," says Dr. Stephen Beetstra, program director at Ohio State University's Nisonger Center, where many CID participants receive training. "One of the leading causes of death in this population is aspiration pneumonia, which can be triggered by bacteria in the mouth. Cleaning their teeth isn't just about oral health, it's about preventing serious, potentially fatal infections."

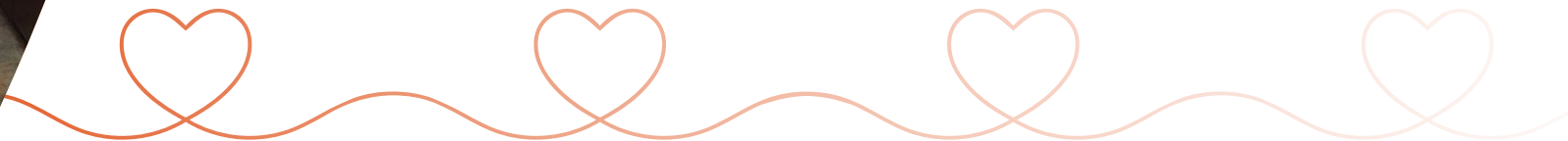
One of the reasons many people with disabilities face long delays for dental care is that they're often referred for sedation, which means they need an office that can accommodate sedation or an operating room that can deliver general anesthesia. Although sedation is sometimes necessary, Dr. Beetstra notes that with the appropriate tools and training—a key goal of the CID training—most patients can be seen in a general office setting.

"By avoiding sedation whenever possible, we protect our patients' health and reduce costs," Dr. Beetstra says. "Taking a patient to the operating room can cost \$12,000 to \$15,000, while we can provide safe, cost-effective care in the clinic."

In 2025, 73 oral health professionals received immersive training, bringing the total number of participating clinics in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana to 21.

Why it matters

The Centers for Inclusive Dentistry program helps train oral health professionals in an equity-based approach to care, ensuring more people with disabilities can access quality, affordable care that meets them where they are.



SPOTLIGHT ON STRATEGIC AIMS

Workforce Development

Funding programs that increase the number of providers practicing in underserved areas.

- \$652,171 in total funding
- 382 lives impacted



Tackling student loan debt

Last year, we consolidated our scholarship and awards programs to maximize our ability to support oral health professionals working in public health. Together with Delta Dental of Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana, we created a new suite of scholarship and loan repayment opportunities for dentists, dental hygienists and dental hygiene students.

The DDF's offerings included:

- A loan repayment program for dentists (up to \$25,000 per year, up to three years) who work in nonprofit clinics.
- A loan repayment program for dental hygienists (up to \$5,000 per year, up to three years) who work in nonprofit clinics
- A scholarship program for dental hygiene students to cover the cost of instrument kits (up to \$5,000, for students entering dental hygiene school) and tuition (up to \$10,000 per year, up to two years)

In its first year, 35 dental hygiene students in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana were awarded nearly \$350,000 to support their education and 18 dentists and dental hygienists received a total of \$230,000 in loan repayment.

"This program is more than financial support—it is an investment in health equity," says Dr. Aditi Gadhvi, a loan repayment recipient who practices at Good Neighbor House in Ohio. "With [the Delta Dental Foundation's] help, I can continue to expand care for vulnerable populations in Dayton and build a future where every patient, regardless of circumstance, has access to compassionate, high-quality oral health care."

Why it matters

As the debt burden for oral health professionals continues to increase, loan repayment can help make careers in public health more desirable, increasing the number of dentists and dental hygienists practicing in underserved areas.



Hands-on Workshops

Sponsored by



Health & Wellness Pavilion

Sponsored by

PHILIPS

Lunch & Learns

Sponsored by

Sponsored by the Foundations of



LISTER

Product Presentations

Sponsored by



Professional Headshots

Sponsored by

Smile Brands

Puppy Play Pen

Sponsored by

AspenDental

Exhibit Hall Happy Hour



Education

Advancing campaigns and programs that promote daily oral hygiene habits and regular visits to an oral health professional.

- \$597,221 in total funding
- 2,414,498 lives impacted



Delivering oral health education, screenings to older adults

The DDF supports two programs that offer oral health care and education to older adults: Smiles on Wheels' Serving Smiles to Seniors and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan's Senior Smiles programs.

Smiles on Wheels and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan travel to community centers and care homes throughout the state, providing older adults with oral health assessments, oral health education (including suggestions on nutritious meals and snacks), individualized dental care kits and referrals to local dentists. Each program aims to connect every older adult who needs one to a dental home.

"Although many of the seniors we see do tell us they have a dentist, we find that many of them are taking medications that cause dry mouth, which can increase the risk of cavities, and they may not know how to address it," says Theresa Meyer, a coordinator with Smiles on Wheels.

She also notes that denture care is a key component of the oral health education Smiles on Wheels provides. "We see people who don't clean their dentures regularly or don't take their dentures out, which is a recipe for inflammation or infection," she says.

In 2025, Serving Smiles to Seniors and Senior Smiles touched nearly 2,700 lives.

Why it matters

Serving Smiles to Seniors and the Senior Smiles programs promote daily oral hygiene habits and regular visits to an oral health professional, a core aim of our strategic plan.



Advocacy

Funding programs and initiatives that drive policy change.

- \$61,378 in total funding
- More than 90 people participated in these efforts, though the total impact will be higher over time



Training oral health leadership at community health centers continues

For the past five years, the DDF has provided grant funding to the NNOHA Oral Health Leadership Institute (NOHLI) to support applicants from Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

NOHLI is a year-long, in-person and online training that provides core knowledge and competencies that community health center leaders need to develop as effective managers, directors and advocates for oral health and their communities.

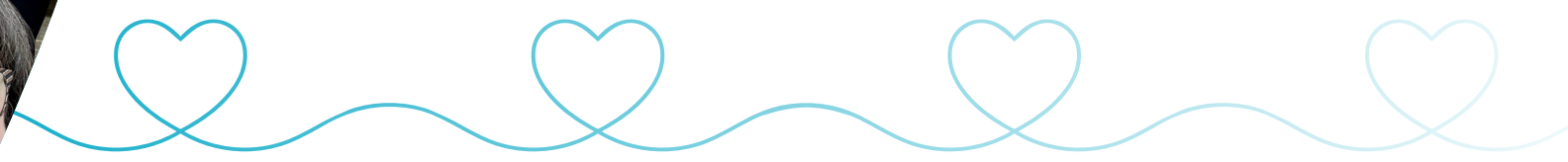
To date, the program has trained more than 200 dental directors.

Last year's cohort included Dr. Bryan Wazbinski, chief dental officer at Cherry Health in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Dr. Lisenia Collazo, a provider at Upper Great Lakes Family Health Center in Calumet, Michigan.

"The NOHLI program was a fantastic experience that helped me grow as an oral health leader," Dr. Wazbinski says. "The instructors and staff were exceptional, and the professional relationships formed over that year have been great. I believe the NOHLI program is invaluable for any emerging leader in oral health."

Why it matters

We fund programs and initiatives that drive policy change, and NOHLI helps equip dental directors with the training and skills they need to be effective leaders and advocates—not only for their patients but also for oral public health.



SPOTLIGHT ON DISABILITIES

More than 25% of our total funding was committed to projects that improve access, train providers and advance policy to better serve people with disabilities.

- \$1,690,692 in total disabilities-related funding across all strategic aims
- 10,115 lives impacted

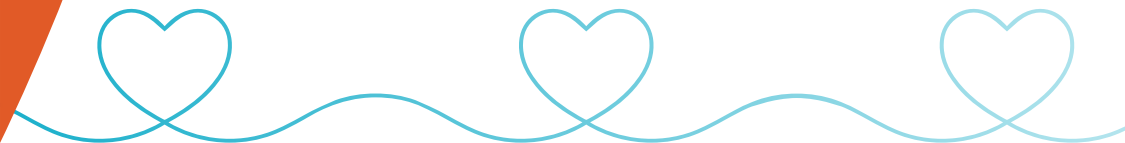
Research supports Medicaid policy recommendations for general anesthesia delivery

The DDF funds research that can help drive policy change that improves access to care for people with disabilities. Last year, the Medicaid, Medicare CHIP Services Dental Association used grant dollars to examine the current policy landscape related to general anesthesia.

General anesthesia is sometimes necessary to deliver dental treatment, especially for people with disabilities or complex medical conditions. But for Medicaid beneficiaries, it may not be covered—or accessible.

The report, [“Exploring Policy Solutions that Support the Delivery of General Anesthesia Supplemental Services Associated with Dental Care,”](#) assesses whether Medicaid policy promotes access to general anesthesia-supported dental care; identifies policies that ensure safety and effectiveness; highlights best practices; and documents alternatives that reduce access barriers.

Their recommendations may form the basis for promoting standardized definitions of medical necessity, harmonizing provider credentialing and supervision policies, enhancing outcomes collection and expanding access through office-based settings.



DELTA DENTAL FOUNDATION



Learn more about our work at
www.deltadental.foundation.



Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)
or [subscribe to our newsletter](#).