

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Project Title: *Utilization of the Post-BS 0-5 Years Pediatric Expanded Function Dental Hygiene (EFDH) Certificate Program to Improve Oral Health Outcomes for Infants and Young Children in Hawai'i*

Applicant Organization: University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM)

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Hawai'i has some of the worst oral health outcomes in the nation receiving a Pew Foundation grade of "F" for the last 3 years. The 2016 Hawai'i third grade surveillance report revealed that 7 out of 10 third graders (71%) experienced tooth decay, with 22% having untreated decay. In addition, more than 60% of children lacked dental sealants, with greater disparities noted based on income, race/ethnicity and geography. The UHM School of Nursing & Dental Hygiene (SONDH) provides educational opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to obtain a baccalaureate (BS) in dental hygiene (DH) graduating 20 students per year and providing 80% of the DH workforce for the State.

The Project Goal is to increase the dental workforce serving children 0-5 years of age in underserved areas of the State of Hawai'i by developing a post-BS 0-5 years pediatric Expanded Function Dental Hygiene (EFDH) certificate program for licensed dental hygienists. The evidence based approach to recruitment, enrollment, progression, and graduation of 15 disadvantaged students by the summer 2022 will increase access to oral care in underserved settings to prevent and decrease tooth decay in children 0-5 years of age. The curriculum will include developmental, social and behavioral instruction with an emphasis on dental education, assessment, diagnosis and delivery of preventive services in underserved communities. Clinical learning delivery settings will include Head Start programs, WIC clinics and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) using mobile dental equipment.

The objectives are: 1) Revise the current BS dental hygiene curriculum to increase culturally diverse pediatric content for all students; 2) Develop a culturally diverse post-BS 0-5 Years Pediatric Expanded Function Dental Hygiene (EFDH) certificate program; 3) Recruit, enroll and provide academic and tuition support to 15 disadvantaged students in the EFDH certificate program; 4) Enhance community partnerships to drive policy change and facilitate employment in rural and/or underserved areas of Hawai'i; and 5) Increase the number of children 0 to 5 years of age receiving dental services by graduates of the UHM BS DH and post-BS EFDH certificate programs.

The approaches include: a) curriculum development using national standards; b) targeted student recruitment and a holistic admission process; c) providing scholarships for the cost of tuition and fees; and d) partnering with clinical sites in underserved areas to develop employment opportunities for the EFDH graduates. The project will use the Rapid Cycle Quality Improvement methodology (Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle) for rapid incremental adjustments to the program with formative and summative evaluations. The project will begin on July 1, 2017 with the first year designated for curriculum development and student recruitment. The first students will begin the EFDH Program on August 22, 2018. Program outcomes will be disseminated locally and nationally. **Funding Priorities:** The funding priorities include: formal relationships with FQHCs for pediatric training; cultural competency and health literacy; special/vulnerable populations; discipline retention; and student diversity.