

## **AABSTRACT**

**Title:** Training Future Dentists to Care for Alabama's Underserved Children from 0-5 Years of Age

**Applicant Organization:** UAB Department of Pediatric Dentistry (DPD)

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**Overview:** This proposal will enhance clinical pediatric predoctoral dental training for children 0-5 years of age by systematically providing (1) didactic courses that increase students' knowledge of oral health literacy, health disparities and clinical pediatric dentistry, (2) interprofessional simulation training that allows students to develop skills in a safe environment and (3) live-patient clinical experiences. This proposal features collaboration with three community-based training sites, including (i) a dental and Women Infant Children (WIC) clinic in a county public health department, (ii) a primary care FQHC in rural Alabama, and (iii) a center at UAB providing care to children and adults with disabilities. These sites provide undergraduate dental students experience in treating young children from minority, rural and developmentally disabled populations. This targeted training will better prepare students to practice in Alabama, where 41% of the population is rural, 27% of children live below the poverty level and all but two counties in the State are designated a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (DHPSA). Achievement will be documented via the following measurable objectives:

- D1 and D2 students will satisfactorily complete didactic training with progress evaluated via structured assessments.
- D3 students will participate in a realistic simulation encounter designed to develop patient-centered clinical communication skills in an interprofessional environment.
- D4 students will engage in clinical rotations where performance and demonstration of clinical competence of specified clinical skills are required.  
Each of these activities will be part of the core UAB pediatric dental curriculum as pre-requisites for graduation.
- To ensure an adequate patient base for training activities, the communities around the training sites will be engaged by:
  - adapting the training sites for dental care of young children
  - scheduling community screening and oral health education events
  - hiring and training a Community Dental Health Coordinator to serve as a liaison between the dental clinics, UAB and the communities being served.
- Student and community focus groups, surveys and practice trends of graduates will help assess the impact of training activities on the pediatric dental workforce.

This proposal meets criteria for Priority 2: Formal Relationship, 3: Cultural Competency and Health Literacy and 4: Special/Vulnerable Populations.