

Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable People

An update on current programs, advocacy work
and steps you can take in your community

Jacquie Maund, AOHC June 2015

Disclosure of Commercial Support

Presenter Disclosure

Presenter: Jacquie Maund

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- **Other:** None

Workshop outline

- 1- New findings: Highlights from 3 recent reports on access to oral health care
- 2-Upcoming program changes: Healthy Smiles Ontario program for low income children
- 3-Current advocacy campaign
- 4-Moving forward at the LHIN level

“Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable people living in Canada” 2014

- 17% of Canadians or 6 million people avoid the dentist due to cost
- Greater inequality in access for women than men
- People with highest dental disease also have greatest barriers to access
 - Low income adults and children
 - The elderly
 - People with disabilities
 - Recent immigrants
 - Aboriginal people
 - People living in rural and remote areas
- The mainly private model of dental care delivery in Canada isn't working
- The problem will get worse:
 - Middle classes now affected
 - Availability of employer dental benefits is declining
 - Elderly population increasing

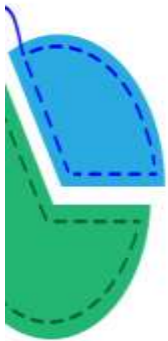
“Review of Oral Health Services in Ontario”

by College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario 2014

- 2-3 million people in Ontario don't have access to oral health care
- Only 1.3% of total spending on dental services is government funded, the lowest level in Canada
- LHINs should include planning for oral health services in their regions
- LHINs should support CHCs, AHACs, FHTs to incorporate oral health services to better integrate oral health into health system

“Low Wages, No Benefits”

Wellesley Institute report 2015



- One-third of workers don't get employer health benefits
- Almost half (45%) of people earning less than \$30,000/year don't have drug & dental coverage

Conclusions from recent forum “Needed: A Tommy Douglas for Dental Care”



- Need affordable, sustainable public programs with appropriate delivery models to address the barriers faced by different groups of vulnerable people
- Eg mobile dental buses; visits to long term care homes

Healthy Smiles Ontario: Upcoming program changes

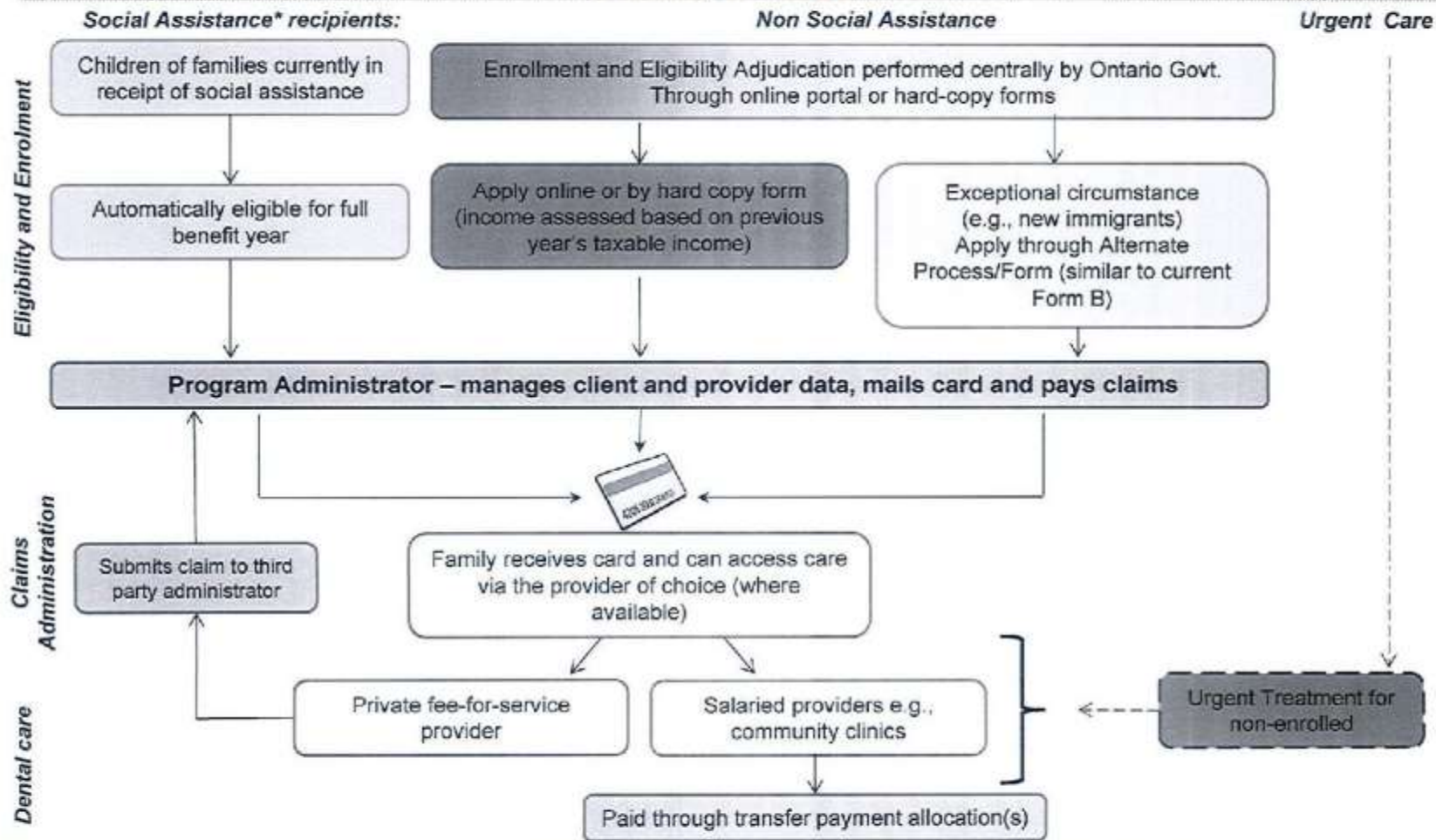
- All current public dental programs for low income children integrated into new Healthy Smiles Ontario
- Due to launch August 2015
- Public Health Units no longer responsible for determining eligibility and processing claims
- MOHLTC will still fund Public Health Units for program delivery

Healthy Smiles Ontario: What will be different?

- Private sector program administrator will deal with centralized enrollment via website, manage claims, adjudicate eligibility
- Children in families on social assistance automatically eligible
- Other families apply on line or via hard copy. Eligibility based on last year's taxable income
- Private administrator mails dental card, manages client & provider data, tracks services provided by clinics

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Future State Eligibility and Access From the Clients' Perspective



* OW, ODSP, ACSD

**PHUs continue to have a role throughout client journey e.g.:
Program promotion/information, referral, enrollment support, treatment**

Healthy Smiles Ontario: Concerns

- Privatization of administration of a public health program
- Not yet clear whether eligibility for urgent treatment will be flexible, or income based
- Not yet clear if prevention component of PHU work will remain as strong
- PHU financial pressures: If your dental suite is funded by/co-located with PHU check with them about financial support and impact of program changes

New Oral Health Advocacy Campaign

2014 Ontario Budget

- **The 10-Year Plan for Ontario's Economy**
- By 2025:
- Ontarians will know they have a secure retirement in their future.
- Ontario's highly skilled and adaptive workforce will compete globally and meet the demands of a changing economy.
- Ontario's dynamic and innovative labour market will enable all segments of society to participate fairly in the Province's diverse job market.
- Over 75 per cent of all elementary school students will be surpassing provincial literacy and numeracy standards.
- Over 70 per cent of Ontario's adult population will hold postsecondary education credentials.
- Ontario will expand alternative methods of learning, such as co-op and work integrated learning options, making Ontario's future college and university students more career and job ready than ever before.
- Ontario's world-class public infrastructure will enhance the quality of life for Ontarians, support economic growth, increase productivity, and meet future demographic needs.
- Ontario's businesses will increase investments in productivity-enhancing areas like information and communications technology, training, and research and development (R&D) to rates comparable to those of their U.S. counterparts.
- Total Ontario exports will double, and exports to China, India and Brazil will more than triple.
- Ontario will be one of the top five jurisdictions in North America for venture capital investment.
- Ontario's agri-food sector will be one of the most innovative in the world.
- **Health and dental benefits will be available to all low-income workers, reducing the welfare wall**

<http://aohc.org/oral-health>

New Ontario Oral Health Alliance 2015 Campaign



THE PROBLEM

- More than 2.3 million people living in Ontario – one of the most affluent places on earth - cannot afford to visit a dentist or dental hygienist. Most are low-income seniors and adults.
- The good news is that in 2014 the Ontario government promised to extend public dental programs to low income adults and seniors....**But, not until 2025.**
- Imagine, 10 more years of suffering from dental pain and infection for people in our communities who cannot afford much needed dental treatment.



Before



After



Why are they living with pain and infection?

Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Government of Ontario

RE: Extending public dental programs to adults in need

Dear Dr. Hoskins,

I am writing to commend your government's decision to extend public dental programs to low income adults and seniors.

But I have to tell you I am disappointed that you are planning to wait 10 years before keeping this important promise.

As you know, more than 2.3 million people in Ontario cannot afford dental care. Thousands end up in hospital Emergency Departments. Each year there are about 59,000 visits to Ontario's hospital Emergency Departments and 218,000 visits to doctors for dental pain and infection. But people can't get treatment there, only painkillers. This costs our healthcare system at least \$37 million/year, an expensive band-aid solution. This is not right.

As a medical doctor you know that teeth and gums are part of the body, and that oral health is an important part of a person's general health and wellbeing.

Dr Hoskins, your government has promised to provide the right health care at the right time in the right place. We need more public dental clinics in Public Health Units, Community Health Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Nurse Practitioner Led Clinics and Community Family Health Teams to provide preventive care and dental treatment to people who can't afford to visit a dentist or dental hygienist.

People with oral health problems cannot endure 10 more years of pain and suffering. Please take action now during your government's 4 year mandate and extend public dental programs to cover low income adults and seniors.

[your personal comments will go here]

Sincerely,

[your contact info will go here]

CC: Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
CC: your local MPP

Add your personal comments to the bottom of the message:

Signed:

First Name: *

Last Name: *

Address: *

City: *

Province:

Postal Code: *

Email: *

☒ Yes, I would like to receive email alerts from Together Ontario

How can you support this campaign?

- Email the link to your networks www.aohc.org/oral-health
- Strengthen and grow local coalitions
 - Connect with anti poverty groups, dental hygienists, seniors groups to raise this issue in your community
- Collect local stories of lack of access; identify & support people willing to share their story
- Seek local media coverage on the campaign, with local stories
- Meet with MPPs
- Tweet a message of support to #ONdental @DrEricHoskins

Getting to the root of dental care at Port Hope clinic

Seniors, low-income residents struggle to access care

Northumberland News

By [Karen Longwell](#) [✉](#)

NORTHUMBERLAND -- Teeth blackened from decay, a Northumberland resident nearly lost her job in hospitality because of her lack of access to dental care.

The woman's story is not unique -- she is one of dozens of mouths the Port Hope Community Health Centre dental clinic sees each week, highlighting the need for more accessible dental care in Ontario. Just over five years ago the Toronto Road clinic started offering services to those who cannot access care due to financial hardship, such as those receiving Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support and people with a low annual income who do not have access to dental benefits.

Dental hygienist Mary Ito, who also operates her own practice in Cobourg, has been working at the clinic one day a week since it opened. At first Ms. Ito was surprised to see patients who hadn't had dental care in years.

"It really opened our eyes," she said.

In the case of one patient, the condition of her teeth, turning black from decay, nearly cost her job because she was working with the public, said Ms. Ito.



Dental care

Karen Longwell / Northumberland News

COBOURG -- Dental hygienist Mary Ito said working at the Port Hope Community Health Centre dental services clinic has been an "eye-opener." Patients go several years without treatment because they

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Moving forward at the local level

- College of Dental Hygienists report calls for LHINs to include planning for oral health in their regions
- SE LHIN provides funding to CHC dental suites
 - How did it come about?
 - How important was data showing ER visits for oral health problems?