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Improving Access to Free Dental Care for Children and Youth

New Integrated Dental Program to Begin January 2016

May 29, 2015

Ontario is integrating six publicly funded dental programs into one, which will provide seamless enrolment and make it easier for eligible children and youth to get free dental care.

After thorough consultation, the plan for implementing this initiative has been adjusted to ensure that more children and youth from low-income families have access to free dental care. All children who are currently eligible for free dental services will continue to be eligible in the new integrated program.

To improve access to free dental care for children and youth, the integrated program will be expanded to include:

- Preventive dental services currently delivered by public health units, which are critical to preventing oral health issues from escalating and reducing emergency room visits.
- Emergency and essential treatment for families in need based on clinical assessment and demonstrated financial hardship.

To successfully implement the new program, the full implementation date has been extended to January 2016. The new date will not impact those currently enrolled in existing dental programs. Ontario is working in partnership with local providers of the province's current public dental programs to ensure that the transition to the new integrated program is seamless for current clients and that no services are disrupted.

In April 2014, the government expanded the Healthy Smiles Ontario

program so that more kids from low-income families without dental coverage could access free dental care. More than 70,000 additional children are now eligible for services under the Healthy Smiles Ontario program as a result of this expansion, for a total of over 460,000 children.

Providing more children and youth with access to [free dental care](#) <<https://www.ontario.ca/health-and-wellness/get-dental-care>> is part of [Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care](#) <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ms/ecfa/healthy_change> and [Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) <<http://www.ontario.ca/home-and-community/realizing-our-potential-ontarios-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019>> .

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