

# Request For Proposal Oklahoma Oral Health Expansion Project

Oklahoma Primary Care Association  
PROPOSALS DUE BY: February 28, 2022

## Organizational Background

*The Oklahoma Primary Care Association (OKPCA) is the state membership organization for the community health centers across Oklahoma. OKPCA's vision is to expand access to affordable medical, dental, and behavioral health care to all Oklahomans. In 2021, over 300,000 Oklahomans were served by a community health center.*

## Project Overview

Oklahoma Primary Care Association (OKPCA) seeks to recruit at least one consultant to serve as an Oral Health Program Specialist (OHPS). The OHPS would be tasked with working with Oklahoma's community health centers and other community-based partners to create access to routine and non-emergent dental care through infrastructure development, relationship building, and workforce growth.

## Project Goals

Increase health center capacity to deliver integrated oral health care services within community health centers and improve health center-specific oral health outcomes on [OK Oral Health Report Card](#) measures through the following activities:

- a) Increasing access to care by providing relevant training and technical assistance (T/TA) to health centers toward establishing and/or expanding dental services, dental delivery sites, and dental workforce positions.
- b) Establishing marketing, recruitment, retention, and other key strategies that increase the number of dentists practicing in OK health center settings above its current baseline.
- c) Providing leadership and coordination support to one or more regional or statewide, multi-stakeholder efforts around oral public health, access to care, and/or quality improvement initiatives.
- d) Supporting dental health professions education programs by one or more of the following:
  - i. Increasing the number of externship/shadowing/practicum experiences available to dental and dental support students within community health center settings
  - ii. Increasing the number of health center dentists that serve as mentors/preceptors to emerging oral health professionals

These goals complement the following Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) training and technical assistance pillars for Primary Care Associations:

- Health center program development
- Development of a health center workforce that supports current and emerging community needs

To reach these goals, Oklahoma Primary Care Association, (OKPCA) is now accepting bids in response to this Request for Proposal (RFP). Competitive proposals that address either a substantial subsection of the given project goals or the entirety of the stated project goals will be evaluated.

## Context and Scope of Work

Serving on behalf of OKPCA, the OHPS will provide technical assistance and workforce recruitment support toward the development of dental programs in OK community health centers. Through collaboration with organizations like the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), the Oklahoma Oral Health Coalition (OOHC), the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry (OUCOD), and other national/community-based partners, the OHPS will work to systematically address barriers related to patient surges, staffing shortages, and operational needs. OKPCA support toward these initiatives will not only assist Oklahoma community health centers in increasing access to dental care but will also advance the quality of the care provided. OKPCA and the contracted OHPS will also offer technical assistance toward securing supplemental funding for either the development or expansion of dental programs in OK community health centers.

Populations vulnerable to COVID-19, including those with low socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic minorities, older adults, the uninsured, and those in rural areas are often at high risk for oral disease and its associated systemic health problems. COVID-19 led to the closure and reduced operational hours of community health center dental sites, limiting access to routine care and prevention. For many Oklahomans, COVID-19 also led to pandemic-related financial strain, which included the loss of dental insurance and dramatic drops in dental care utilization, as other more immediate needs like food and housing were prioritized.

Some Oklahomans are now in a better position to reprioritize and resume nonemergency dental care amid other delayed health care services at health centers. However, these potential patients are being met with delays in care because of a limited oral health workforce that does not have the capacity to provide timely appointments. This situation is further exacerbated by the recent expansion of Medicaid dental benefits for adults in Oklahoma. Prior to July 2021, the state's adult Medicaid beneficiaries only had access dental care services for emergency procedures. Preventive care was not included. On July 1, 2021, Oklahoma's Medicaid agency began allowing adult participants to receive preventive care like cleanings, fluoride, periodontal scaling, exams, x-rays, fillings, and dentures. This policy change was pursued, in part, as a public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While expanded dental access is excellent news for population health in Oklahoma, in the short term, Oklahoma's health centers are juggling a large influx of new dental patients, and with a limited workforce that was already struggling to meet needs within health professional shortage areas (HPSAs). OKPCA's proposed focus on oral health will support health centers to establish, expand, and sustain accessibility of comprehensive primary care services through the provision of training and technical assistance to health center executives, providers, and support staff on oral health outcomes. This RFP seeks to identify proposals for consultant support to begin addressing the oral health goals and challenges OKPCA has outlined.

## Target Deliverable Schedule

The project period for this work and position began July 01, 2021 and ends April 30, 2023. Given that the desired start date has already passed, work will begin shortly after proposals are received, evaluated, and awarded. Final work deliverables for the project are to be completed on April 30, 2023.

## Existing Challenges

The following restrictive factors have been identified:

- Medicaid expansion for adult dental care has created an influx of patients who have not traditionally had access to dental care. Finding appointment capacity in community health center dental programs for this new population, while simultaneously combatting the service backlog for existing patients due to pandemic shutdowns has been a challenge.
- There are a limited number of Oklahoma community health centers who have in-house dental programs. Plus, there is limited funding to support the establishment of dental departments within health centers that do not currently provide this service line.
- Recruiting dentists to work in OK health centers has been difficult, leaving vacancies that further delay access to care due to understaffing.
- Underdeveloped efforts to educate community partners on the critical relationship between oral health and overall health has limited the state's potential to prioritize and expand dental services across the state.

## Budget Constraints

All activities associated with this RFP must meet the grant guidelines as laid out by the Health and Human Services Administration (HRSA) Notice of Award (NOA) for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

## Evaluation Metrics

The Oral Health Expansion Project will be evaluated using the following metrics:

- Increased health center capacity to provide dental services compared to 2020 baseline data, as evidenced by growth in the number of dentists employed by OK community health centers
- 20 non-dental health center staff trained to deliver fluoride varnish (FV) and/or other types of screening/ preventative care services in the primary care setting.
- Growth over 2020 baseline in the number of health center preceptors/sites participating in an FQHC- based dental externship program with the OU College of Dentistry.
- Improved community health center performance on measures featured within the OK Oral Health Report Card.

The Oklahoma Primary Care Association (OKPCA) will evaluate bidders and proposals based on the following criteria:

- Previous experience/past performance history
- Samples and/or case studies from previous projects
- Projected costs
- Experience and technical expertise
- Responsiveness and answers to questions in the next section.

## RFP Responses Must Address the Following to be Considered

- Discuss knowledge of, or previous experience with community health centers.
- Share your previous experience with the development and/or expansion of a dental practice. Detail whether that experience was in a public or private health setting.
- Discuss your experience educating and recruiting dental professionals and/or other emerging professionals for service or employment opportunities. Describe if/how you connected emerging professionals with mentors in your previous work?
- Share your experiences with public health and integrated care models.
- Discuss challenges you faced while establishing/expanding a dental practice and how you were able to overcome the issue.
- Have you ever been or are you currently debarred for doing work for the federal government?

## Submission Requirements

Bidders must adhere to the following guidelines to be considered:

- Proposals must be received by OKPCA by February 28, 2022. Bidders who are interested in submitting a proposal should respond to Lisa Pendarvis, [lpendarvis@okpca.org](mailto:lpendarvis@okpca.org).
- Include a resume or curriculum vitae.
- Include samples and references in your proposal.
- Proposals should not be more than 10 pages. We acknowledge proposal packets that include example work may exceed 10 pages, however we ask you limit the narrative responses within your proposal to no more than 10 pages.
- A proposed schedule must also be included and clearly expressed.

## Contact Information

For questions connected to this RFP, please reach out to Lisa Pendarvis, [lpendarvis@okpca.org](mailto:lpendarvis@okpca.org).