INTRODUCTION

For generations, children in Maine have suffered from poor oral health, taking a painful toll and causing them to miss school, suffer social consequences, and experience unnecessary pain. Poor oral health among children has direct links to overall physical health, and can contribute to illnesses such as diabetes and heart-related conditions later in life. For young children, untreated oral health conditions may be the first step on a life-long path toward poor oral health as an adult.

To promote children’s oral health in Maine, the Partnership for Children’s Oral Health has now been established—the first of its kind in the New England region. The Partnership aims to eradicate children’s dental caries, which is the most prevalent chronic disease in children and is also preventable. Drawing on the collective strengths of many different stakeholders, including practitioners, colleges of dentistry, children’s advocates, state government, parents, members of the community, and many others, the Partnership will: build upon prevention programs (such as From the First Tooth); illustrate the impact of poor oral health for children through public awareness campaigns and targeted education; introduce new models of care delivery and treatments; create and support a policy/advocacy agenda in support of children’s oral health; and track key oral health metrics.

The Partnership seeks an entrepreneurial and passionate founding Executive Director to help create and carry out a bold plan to advance children’s oral health in Maine. The new Executive Director will work with an engaged Board to catalyze new coalitions and deepen cross-sector engagement on behalf of Maine children, inspire support from diverse communities and stakeholders across the spectrum of care, and help identify and secure funding support for this important work.

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN’S ORAL HEALTH: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The problem of poor oral health, in the form of caries, is significant and the disease is both preventable and treatable. There are many contributing factors to poor oral health, particularly for children, including poverty and the current structure of health care that separates oral care from other parts of medicine.

In 2006, the trustees of the Sadie and Harry Davis Foundation (the Foundation) identified the threat of childhood caries as a silent epidemic which was having a terrible impact on children in Maine. The Foundation established From the First Tooth to help integrate childhood oral health and physical
health in primary care settings by engaging physicians and their team members to do oral health screenings, apply fluoride varnish, make referrals to dentists, and educate parents. *From the First Tooth* proposed an innovative way to bring dentists and physicians together to help prevent the most common health problem among children. The program was piloted in 2007 and has been administered by MaineHealth since 2009. Now, almost 10 years after its development, *From the First Tooth* is becoming the standard of care in Maine.

Over the past year, the Foundation has brought together a key group of oral health stakeholders to establish the Partnership for Children’s Oral Health to develop a plan for a collective effort in support of children’s oral health in Maine. This group of stakeholders will expand, drawing on the strengths of many different players in the oral health field, including practitioners, colleges of dentistry, children’s advocates, state government, parents, members of the community, and many others. The Partnership’s work will be guided by the following principles:

- Every child in Maine, no matter his or her zip code, deserves to be healthy and a healthy mouth is essential to overall health.
- Poor children and their families suffer disproportionately and deserve particular attention on the issue of oral health.
- The State of Maine has a vital interest in helping to ensure that all Maine children have excellent oral health if it is to help promote the financial health, productivity, and quality of life for its citizens.
- There is a critical need to engage in education and promotion across the state so that Maine families understand the importance of good oral health and the direct connection between oral health and physical health; and,
- The integration of oral health and physical health lies at the very core of the work.

The Partnership’s agenda will focus on advancing the prevention work established with *From the First Tooth*, working strategically to support Maine’s communities in their understanding of key oral health issues through public awareness campaigns and targeted education; introducing new models of care delivery and treatments; creating and supporting and policy/advocacy agenda in support of children’s oral health; and tracking key oral health metrics.

The Partnership will be governed by a small Board whose principal role will be to oversee its finances and review the work of the Executive Director. Additionally, a Partnership Council of subject matter experts and oral health stakeholders will help the Executive Director develop a comprehensive strategy and work plan. The Foundation will be represented on the Board and the Council.

The Foundation has committed to contribute $750,000 annually to support the Partnership’s administrative expenses and programmatic activities. The organization’s initial budget for the first full year of operations will be $750,000 and is expected to grow to over $1.5 million as it raises additional funds for programmatic activities.
KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The new Executive Director can expect to engage the following key opportunities and challenges:

**In concert with the Board, build a strategy to catalyze a broad-based statewide movement to improve the oral health of all Maine children.** The Executive Director will bring a demonstrated passion for promoting children’s oral health and broader health in general, and will bring proven leadership and vision to help the Partnership quickly and effectively establish itself as the “go-to” partner and convener in the field.

**Engage broadly with key stakeholders to build lasting, trusting partnerships that drive results.** The Executive Director will identify and cultivate relationships with a diverse set of stakeholders, including the dental community and leaders across public health, education, community-based organizations, and others to leverage change. As the Partnership’s chief spokesperson and coalition builder, s/he will bring a clear, inspiring, and credible voice to amplify its core principles, including the need for integration of oral and physical health across the spectrum of care and the need to change the culture of understanding of the direct connection between oral health and broader quality of life, financial health, and productivity. A natural connector and convener, s/he will bring the networks, savvy, and skill to identify opportunities to unify coalitions behind key issues that impact oral health.

**Expand funding relationships to ensure diversified and sustainable support.** With the full support of the Foundation and the Board, the Executive Director will identify and engage funders who are willing to support the work of the Partnership to ensure its long-term sustainability.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

While no one candidate will embody all the qualifications enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- Demonstrated passion for and commitment to advancing children’s oral health; Proven ability to articulate and convey a compelling shared vision and translate it to action;

- A natural steward of relationships with demonstrated experience creating lasting partnerships across a wide spectrum of stakeholders; Experienced with theories of systems change, group process, and collective action are desired; An active listener who meaningfully solicits and integrates the perspectives of partners;

- Nuanced and wide-ranging understanding of the landscape of primary care, the health care system, quality improvement, public and population health, and their intersections with oral health; A strong grasp of the role of multiple constituencies and stakeholders as they relate to these fields; Specific knowledge and experience with oral health, the current landscape of the field in Maine and/or in broader rural environments is strongly preferred;
A dynamic leadership style and presence; An entrepreneurial and energetic self-starter who is drawn to opportunities to build and carry out new initiatives; Experience in a start-up environment is strongly preferred;

Exceptional ability to convey complex information, both spoken and written, for a variety of audiences of different backgrounds in a way that builds trust and inspires them to engage with the Partnership;

Experience successfully cultivating relationships with private foundations, major donors, and other prospective funders as demonstrated by securing funds related to oral health and/or children’s health is strongly preferred;

A minimum of 10-15 years of experience in senior leadership roles in organizations related to oral health, health care, and/or public health; and

Advanced degree in a field relevant to health/health care, policy and/or management is preferred.

**TO APPLY**

The Partnership for Children’s Oral Health has retained the services of Nonprofit Professional Advisory Group in this recruitment. Vice President Allison Kupfer Poteet and Senior Associate Cara Pearsall are leading the search. Applications, including a cover letter, describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), salary history, and where you learned of the position should be sent to: PCOH-ED@nonprofitprofessionals.com. To expedite internal sorting and reviewing processes, please type your name (Last, First) as the only contents in the subject line of your e-mail.

The Partnership for Children’s Oral Health is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

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