



DELTA DENTAL OF COLORADO  
FOUNDATION

***For Immediate Release***

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## **A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR COLORADO'S CHILDREN: HEALTHY UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL COLLABORATIVE INTEGRATES COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVES**

*Colorado debuts a new program to bring free oral health care to thousands of children*

**DENVER (February 10, 2024)** — The Healthy Universal Preschool Collaborative (HUPC) is redefining how early childhood programs support the health and well-being of young children. As Colorado's Universal Preschool (UPK) continues to expand, HUPC's innovative approach to integrating health-focused standards is setting a new benchmark for early learning programs statewide.

Funded by Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation and supported by [Assuring Better Child Health and Development \(ABCD\)](#) and [Healthy Child Care Colorado \(HCCC\)](#), HUPC brings together six local coordinating organizations (LCOs) to help shape a comprehensive, community-driven model for early childhood health integration.

### **Why healthy development standards matter**

Starting July 1, 2025, all UPK programs must comply with the Healthy Development Quality Standards as outlined in regulation [8-CCR 1401-1-4.112](#), which emphasizes oral health screenings in addition to developmental, vision, and hearing screenings. The HUPC project is proving to be a critical resource for helping UPK programs and communities successfully meet these new requirements.

Research shows that health and education are deeply interconnected. For example, untreated oral health issues in children not only cause pain and discomfort, affecting a child's ability to learn, focus and thrive, but HUPC's innovation is embedding oral health initiatives into the fabric of preschool education, laying the foundation for academic success and well-being.

"At the heart of HUPC are co-design teams made up of local coordinating organizations (LCO's), educators, health care professionals, and community stakeholders," explains D.J. Close, Executive Director of the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation. "These teams analyze local needs, identify health service gaps, and develop tailored policies for screening and referrals. This community-driven approach seamlessly integrates health services to the unique needs and capacities of preschools." By partnering with [Child Care Health Consultants \(CCHCs\)](#), nurses, and physicians that support health and safety across early childhood settings, the HUPC project supports programs as they embed an array of screening and referral activities in UPK, including oral, vision, hearing, and developmental screenings.

### **Real progress, tangible impact**

Since its launch, the HUPC project has achieved significant milestones:

- Six local coordinating organizations serving 11 rural and urban counties are participating in the project: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Denver, El Paso, Fremont, Mineral, Morgan, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Weld counties.

- More than 75 community partners — including educators, health care professionals, and community stakeholders — are actively involved in co-design teams.
- More than 100 Universal Preschool Programs serving more than 1,500 children are now participating across diverse settings, including home, center, and school-based sites.
- More than 120 early childhood professionals have been trained on Cavity-Free Kids.
- More than 20 Child Care Health Consultants have committed to working with LCOs and UPK programs to conduct oral health screenings using new training and screening tools developed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

These results highlight the scalability and effectiveness of HUPC’s model in strengthening early childhood health initiatives.

### **Tools and resources: The backbone of success**

To support LCOs and preschools participating in the project, ABCD and HCCC have developed a suite of practical resources, including:

- Training modules on co-design, oral health integration, and implementing screening and referral processes.
- Community data snapshots to guide decision-making.
- Activity tracking tools to monitor progress in developmental, vision, hearing, and oral health screenings.
- Resource lists tailored to local community needs.
- Referral documentation templates.
- Tools for connecting parents with essential services.

One standout accomplishment is the development of a self-paced Cavity-Free Kids online course by Healthy Child Care Colorado, designed to equip early childhood professionals with practical knowledge on integrating health standards into their work. The Cavity-Free Kids training, which launches February 2025 on [Colorado’s Professional Development Information System \(PDIS\)](#), was created in direct response to challenges identified by project participants, including scheduling challenges and limitations of virtual training sessions.

### **Looking ahead: A model for the future**

As HUPC continues to evolve, it offers a replicable model for LCOs and organizations seeking to embed health services into early childhood systems and comply with the 2025 UPK healthy development requirements. By prioritizing collaboration with Child Care Health Consultants and community-driven solutions, along with the right tools, collaboration, and vision, we can build healthier communities starting from the earliest years of life.

Are you ready to transform your preschool into a model of health and educational excellence? [Click here](#) to learn more about the Healthy Universal Preschool Collaborative or contact Lorendia Schmidt (ABCD) at [lorendia@coloradoabcd.org](mailto:lorendia@coloradoabcd.org).

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**About Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation**

At Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation (DDCOF), our mission is to elevate the well-being of all Coloradans by advancing oral health equity. We know that oral health is essential to overall health. As a funder rooted in equity, we believe that true change begins with listening. We value our communities and the expertise of our partners. By creating space for dialogue and discovery, we empower our partners to explore bold ideas, foster innovation, and drive meaningful progress toward a healthier Colorado.

As part of Delta Dental of Colorado, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the oral health of the communities we serve, DDCOF plays a vital role in realizing our shared vision: a healthy smile for all. To learn more about Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation, visit [www.deltadentalcofoundation.org](http://www.deltadentalcofoundation.org).