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**Free dental referral service expands care options, addresses health disparities**

*New partnership helps Washington state residents who are low income access critical oral health and whole person care.*

**SEATTLE**—Washington state residents who are low income or uninsured and need dental care now have more options. DentistLink—a free dental referral service in Washington state for people with Apple Health (Medicaid) or no insurance—has teamed up with Project Access Northwest to provide a growing number of people dental care and more. Project Access Northwest is a nonprofit that connects people who are low income to essential health care services.

When you call or text DentistLink for referrals, you will reach a team with deep experience connecting people to the care they need. In addition to dental care, you'll now find a more comprehensive system of support including:

- Medical and behavioral health care.
- Resources to help access transportation to and from appointments.
- Telephone interpretation services.

DentistLink—a private-public partnership Arcora Foundation and Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) fully fund—has collaborated with Project Access Northwest to provide expanded referral options.

“Our exciting, new partnership with Project Access Northwest elevates DentistLink as an essential tool to address the unique needs of our priority populations across the state,” said Arcora President and CEO Vanetta Abdellatif. “Project Access Northwest brings knowledge of and experience with communities statewide that have been underinvested in—like Black, Indigenous, and People of Color—which advances our goal of equitable access to oral and overall health services for everyone.”

Across Washington state, oral health disparities persist mostly by race or ethnicity, language spoken at home, geography, and income. Health disparities are specific differences in health outcomes and health care across population groups rooted in social, economic, and environmental disadvantages. In 2023, for example, 61% of Washington adults who are low income—earned less than \$50,000 a year—didn't visit a dentist.

“For nearly 20 years, Project Access Northwest has worked to address the unmet needs of people who face barriers to care,” said Project Access Northwest President and CEO Gary Renville. “The partnership with Arcora and HCA on DentistLink is a continuation of that mission to effectively and compassionately connect more people to care when, where, and how they need it.”

Demand for DentistLink continues to increase. In 2018, the service had 12,000 user requests. In 2023, that number was more than 65,000. For 2024, DentistLink is on pace to reach more than 76,000 user requests with more than 38,000 requests in the first 6 months of the year.

"I am so thankful to the person who gave me your number. I was able to book an appointment with [a provider]," said a recent DentistLink user. We're not using the person's name to protect their privacy. "I was getting nowhere just trying it on my own. Thank you for your service."

"Project Access Northwest is an ideal partner to position DentistLink to meet current and future needs," said HCA Dental Director Sarah Vander Beek. "This experienced team has a record of success connecting patients to care and offering the personalized support required to make sure they make it to their appointments."

Nothing has changed in how you access [DentistLink](#). You have 3 options:

- Phone—call or text 844-888-5465 Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
- [Online search](#)—find dental care near you any time.
- [Online form](#)—answer a few questions, and we'll connect you to care.

### **About Arcora Foundation**

[Arcora Foundation](#) advances oral health and equity across Washington state. We are the foundation of [Delta Dental of Washington](#), and the state's largest foundation dedicated to this cause. We lead with equity in our work to achieve good oral health for all. Through partnerships, we focus our prevention and access priorities on racial and ethnic communities—specifically Black, Indigenous, and People of Color—where disparities in oral disease and access to care are significant. Our mission is in our name: bending the **arc** of **oral** health toward equity.

### **About Washington State Health Care Authority**

Functioning as both the state's largest health care purchaser and its behavioral health authority, the [Washington State Health Care Authority](#) (HCA) is a leader in ensuring Washington residents have the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

There are three pillars of our work: Apple Health (Medicaid); the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) and School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) programs; and behavioral health and recovery. Under these pillars, HCA purchases health care, including behavioral health treatment for more than 2.7 million Washington residents and provides behavioral health prevention, crisis, and recovery supports to all Washington residents.

### **About Project Access Northwest**

[Project Access Northwest](#), a trusted nonprofit 501(c)(3) founded in 2006, connects vulnerable and uninsured individuals in Washington state with access to a wide range of specialty medical care, including dental and behavioral health services. Through a network of nearly 2,500 volunteer health care providers and regional hospital systems, the organization has facilitated over 65,000 individual



appointments. With the support of care coordinators, 97% of clients attend their scheduled appointments.

Project Access Northwest's innovative program improves access to health care, addresses critical social drivers of health through wrap-around services, empowers individuals to achieve their health goals, contributes to workforce development, and saves the health care system millions of dollars annually.

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