# Request for Applications

## Important Information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Purpose:</th>
<th>The State Oral Health Leadership Institute (SOHLI) is a 10-month professional development program for pairs of state Medicaid dental program directors and state oral health program directors, focused on building capacity to improve access to dental services and oral health outcomes for low-income children and adults.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Request for Applications (RFA) Release:</td>
<td>July 10, 2017</td>
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<td>Informational Calls for States:</td>
<td>July 25, 2017, 1:00-2:00 pm EDT</td>
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<td>Applications Due:</td>
<td>August 21, 2017, 5:00 pm EDT</td>
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<td>Selection Announcement:</td>
<td>Mid-September 2017</td>
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<td>Project Period:</td>
<td>October 2017 – July 2018</td>
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<td>In-Person Launch Meeting:</td>
<td>November 15 – 17, 2017</td>
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<td>Eligibility:</td>
<td>Pairs of state Medicaid dental program directors and state oral health program directors or individuals in equivalent state leadership positions.</td>
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State Oral Health Leadership Institute

Purpose

There is increasing recognition among state and federal policymakers of the important relationship between oral health and overall physical health and social well-being. Through considerable investments in both Medicaid health coverage and public health efforts focusing on oral health, states have a vested interest in improving residents’ oral health.

To advance that goal, the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is offering the State Oral Health Leadership Institute (SOHLI) for state Medicaid dental program directors and state oral health program directors. SOHLI will provide these pairs of individuals with the necessary leadership skills and policy knowledge to improve access to dental services and oral health outcomes for low-income children and adults. This Request for Applications is for the second cohort of SOHLI, which will take place October 2017 – July 2018.

Background

Low-income Americans — approximately 74 million of whom are served by Medicaid — face elevated risks for oral disease, exacerbated by a diverse and daunting set of obstacles to accessing oral health care. Given current uncertainties around future Medicaid coverage, state budgetary pressures, and the diverse set of challenges to oral health among vulnerable populations, partnerships between state Medicaid and public health agencies are critical to advancing statewide oral health.

In most states, Medicaid programs and public health departments share responsibility for addressing the oral health needs of low-income residents. Each entity typically has its own dental director with responsibility for the agency’s respective oral health efforts — often operating in silos with distinct, though sometimes overlapping, goals and strategies. They work variably to improve: oral health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; timely and appropriate use of services; cost-effective use of resources; and, ultimately, oral health outcomes. While the programs differ in their underlying objectives and approaches to achieving these goals, their commonalities suggest missed opportunities to leverage efforts.

Often, an important “missing link” in the collaboration of these two programs is shared knowledge of their counterparts’ policy, delivery, and financing environments, in large part because of a state government culture that does not cultivate cross-agency engagement. To achieve broad improvements in oral health, Medicaid dental program directors and state oral health program directors need skills to manage their own programs effectively and work together to transform their oral health care system.

Program Description

SOHLI is a 10-month program designed to: (1) increase participants’ leadership skills, policy knowledge, and program-improvement acumen; and (2) facilitate cross-agency collaboration in pursuit of statewide oral health improvement goals. These objectives will be achieved through the combination of a program curriculum that supports completion of a joint transformation project by each state pair, and a leadership-development plan by each individual (known as a SOHLI “Fellow”). Up to five state pairs of Medicaid dental program directors and oral health program directors will be selected as SOHLI Fellows for the second cohort (October 2017 – July 2018). Since January 2017, CHCS has been supporting the first SOHLI cohort, composed of five pairs from Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, and Washington, DC.
Program Curriculum

The program curriculum is designed to be relevant to the SOHLI Fellows’ interests and the current environment at both the federal and state levels. It includes three integrated components:

- **Component One** will build a shared understanding of the fundamentals of Medicaid dental benefit design, financing, and service delivery models; funding models for public health activities related to oral health improvement; and approaches to addressing the social determinants of oral health. This component will also include information about innovative and promising approaches to increase dental coverage access and subsequent oral health outcomes.

- **Component Two** will develop the leadership and organizational skills necessary to lead complex change within the context of state governments, and will support Fellows’ completion of individual leadership-development plans. Topics will include leadership development, team building, cross-sector collaboration, and strategies for handling negotiation and conflict.

- **Component Three** will focus on a joint transformation project, providing a foundation for Fellows to engage with state colleagues and apply newly acquired leadership and policy skills in their state’s efforts to improve the oral health of residents.

All SOHLI Fellows are required to participate in the following activities:

- In-person launch meeting;
- Series of individual-state and full-cohort technical assistance calls;
- In-person site visit from the CHCS team to support their work; and
- In-person closing meeting.

Note: Applications to SOHLI must include a commitment from state leadership for Fellows to participate in all in-person and virtual activities.

State pairs will identify an oral health goal, develop a joint transformation project, and implement the project to work toward that goal. They will be guided in these efforts by CHCS staff, which has extensive experience working with state officials on program improvement initiatives. A national advisory group that includes leadership from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) and other individuals with expertise in Medicaid and public-health oral health policy will provide additional guidance.

SOHLI Fellows will be reimbursed for their travel and related costs (e.g., airfare, accommodations, meals). Technical assistance will also be provided at no cost to the Fellows and their teams.

**Joint Transformation Project**

Each state pair will be supported in designing and implementing a joint transformation project to achieve a mutually agreed-upon state oral health goal. This project will serve as a centerpiece of the SOHLI experience, providing a vehicle for applying lessons from the leadership and policy training. SOHLI applicants are asked to identify two potential project topics as part of their application. CHCS will help each state pair early in the year to select one topic (which may differ from the two proposed in the application), and subsequently deliver technical assistance around planning, implementation, and evaluation.
Leadership Development Plan

Each SOHLI Fellow will complete an individual leadership development plan designed to identify areas of improvement in their leadership competencies and highlight opportunities in their joint transformation project to put those leadership skills into practice. The plan is one component of the leadership development suite, which includes leadership coaching to expose Fellows to different leadership models, as well as support from CHCS to identify specific opportunities to lead through their project implementation.

Project Timeline

Following is a tentative SOHLI schedule:

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 10, 2017</td>
<td>Distribution of Request for Applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 25, 2017</td>
<td>Informational call for potential applicants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(applicants are not required to participate in this call)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 21, 2017</td>
<td>Applications due via electronic submission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-September 2017</td>
<td>State selection announcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 2, 2017</td>
<td>Project launch call for all selected Fellows</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 15–17, 2017</td>
<td>In-person launch meeting (location TBD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>February and March 2018</td>
<td>Site visits from CHCS staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 2018</td>
<td>Two-day, in-person closing meeting (location TBD) and project end</td>
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Eligibility Criteria

- Each application must be submitted jointly by the state’s Medicaid dental program director and state oral health program director. If there is no director role in one or both of these agencies/departments, the most senior-level staff person with responsibility for the program may apply.

- Applicants must commit to participating in all aspects of SOHLI, including in-person attendance at two meetings over the 10-month program, an in-state technical assistance site visit, regular technical assistance calls, and completion of a joint transformation project. Supporting documentation, such as letters of support, must include language specifying agreement to this level of participation.

Selection Criteria

CHCS will review each application and select up to five state leadership pairs as Fellows for the second SOHLI cohort, using the following criteria:

- Presentation of a thoughtful vision for collaboration, laying out some potential roles and skills that each person contributes that will ultimately strengthen the transformation project and improve oral health in the state.
An astute description of factors that may affect the success of this collaboration, and the likelihood that goals can be achieved.

Submission of potential project topics that reflect the pair’s preliminary ability to identify common goals and approaches to achieving them.

Written support for participation in SOHLI from state leadership (i.e., the state Medicaid director and state health official) in each applicant’s primary agency, specifying permission to participate in all SOHLI activities.

**How to Apply**

Each state pair should **jointly** develop and submit the application, including:

- A cover sheet with the two applicants’ names and contact information (including title, department/agency, mailing address, phone number, and email address), as well as the names and contact information of their administrative assistants.

- A résumé or curriculum vitae for each applicant.

- A brief description of any past collaboration between the agencies/departments around oral health or another health issue and how the pair sees SOHLI building on these. Specifically, what does collaboration look like now, and what do the applicants hope it will look like at the end of the project?

- A description of two potential transformation projects (one-page maximum for each). The description should include:
  - The rationale, goal(s), and objective(s) for the project, along with a description of the target population(s), the proposed approach to influencing change, and suggested approaches to measuring progress/success;
  - Any potential barriers to the success of the project and/or the collaboration, and how the pair might overcome these barriers; and
  - Any topical areas of interest for technical assistance.

- Letters from the state Medicaid director and from the state health official (or individuals in equivalent positions) stating their willingness to enable the applicants to meet the program’s participation requirements, specifying each applicant’s ability to attend both meetings **in-person**.

Applications for this solicitation should be submitted electronically in a Word document or PDF to Stacey Chazin, Director of Prevention Programs, CHCS, at schazin@chcs.org. Please submit any questions about SOHLI or this application to that e-mail address, as well. **Applications are due August 21, 2017, by 5:00 pm EDT.** In fairness to all, late applications will not be accepted. Please use Times New Roman or similar 11 pt. font, with at least one-inch margins, 1.5 or double-spaced.

There will be an informational conference call for potential state applicants on **July 25, 2017, from 1:00 – 2:00 pm EDT**, to discuss the program and answer any questions. Participation in this call is **not required** to apply to the program. Please click [here](#) to register for the call.
About the Center for Health Care Strategies

The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a nonprofit policy center dedicated to improving the health of low-income Americans. CHCS works with state and federal agencies, health plans, providers, and consumer groups to advance innovative and cost-effective models for organizing, financing, and delivering health care services. Its work focuses on: (1) enhancing access to coverage and services; (2) advancing delivery system and payment reform; and (3) integrating services for people with complex needs.

CHCS provides health policy and leadership development resources to support state Medicaid directors and their management teams in optimizing the performance of publicly financed care. Activities include the Medicaid Leadership Institute, a professional development program for Medicaid directors; the State Oral Health Leadership Institute; as well as state-based policy and leadership training academies for state Medicaid staff and key partners. For more information, visit www.chcs.org.

ENDNOTES