

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$669.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2004 shall revert to the general fund.

Current DOH funding for community dental services is \$907,440. Funding is dispersed to six contractors at multiple sites throughout the state. New funds would improve access to dental care services and positively impact the oral health status of New Mexicans.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The administrative impact to the Department of Health would be minimal and the additional activities related to procurement, contracting and monitoring could be handled with current staff.

RELATIONSHIP

Relates to:

Senate Bill 408, which proposes to appropriate \$100.0 in general fund to the Department of Health for fiscal year 2004 to provide rural portable dental clinics for children.

Senate Bill 73 which would appropriate \$1,200.0 from the general fund to the DOH in fiscal year 2004 to contract with rural primary health care and dental clinics to leverage federal dollars at newly established or expanded clinic sites.

HB370 Early Childhood Dental Caries Program -- funds and coordinates an early childhood caries program.

SJM24 Develop Early Childhood Dental Caries Program -- requests that the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNM HSC) Division of Dental Services create a task force to coordinate efforts to develop a comprehensive early childhood caries program, and evaluate and make recommendations about fluoride varnish projects.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

A large number of New Mexico's population has difficulty securing access to dental services. The shortage of dental professionals and the inability to pay for dental services are two significant reasons why the state's dental needs are not met. Many dentists will not accept Medicaid reimbursement, creating another barrier to dental care access.

NM Health Policy Commission reports New Mexico has the highest percent of people without health insurance in the nation: 22.4% versus a 14.4% national average.

The following socioeconomic indicators illustrate NM's standing in oral health care:

- 49th in the country in oral health access
- 50th in the country in poverty

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DOH indicates that 29 of New Mexico's 33 counties are in Primary Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas. Many of the state's residents are not served by a health safety net. Many residents in the border area between Mexico and New Mexico obtain dental services in Mexico. Funding contained in SB 450 would allow the DOH to partner with community dental health service providers to assure the delivery services to the underserved.

DOH reports that 31 of 33 counties in NM are medically under-served by physicians, based on federal criteria. Only five counties have an adequate dental capacity and at least 17 counties have a critical shortage based on the number and distribution of licensed dentists.

Children and adults with dental problems may not eat properly, may develop learning and education problems and may suffer self-esteem issues. The Department of Health provides services from 54 public health clinics, many in rural and low-income areas. There are no income requirements.

BD/prr