

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Erie County Department of Health expanding access to dental care for Erie County children

ERIE, PA – The Erie County Department of Health and GECAC Head Start are working together to use teledentistry services to provide greater access to dental care for underinsured, uninsured and low-income children of our community.

Through grants provided in part by the generosity of the Hamot Health Foundation, the Erie County Department of Health’s licensed public health dental hygiene practitioner, Karen Omniewski, will deliver cleanings, fluoride treatments, patient education and teledentistry services to eligible Head Start students at GECAC centers in Erie County.

Shortages of dentists accepting Medicaid and a lack of reliable transportation, in addition to cultural barriers and financial concerns, have created limited access to dental care.

A teledentistry model has been implemented using a “store and forward” technique, where the practitioner uses an intra-oral camera to photograph the children’s teeth via a secure app. These images are stored on the app and forwarded to a licensed dentist, who examines them within 48-72 hours. The children’s guardians are then notified of the need for treatment or referrals, or to establish continuity of dental care.

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