NEWS RELEASE

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Local Free Clinic Answers Medicaid & ACA Dental Coverage Gap

September 2, 2015

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(Southampton, PA) The media is buzzing with stories about the Affordable Care Act and expanded Medicaid. The good news: more Americans are insured than ever before. The bad news: dental care is still largely inaccessible. And as research continues to prove the interconnection between oral health and a person's overall health, the shortage of dental care is very bad news.

Individuals without dental insurance do not seek dental care until problems are severe, painful, and unbearable. According to a [recent study from Stanford University](#), patients without access to a dentist turn to hospital Emergency Rooms, where physicians can only provide pain medication and antibiotics, but not the kind of care that prevents dental problems from returning.   New service delivery models need to be established to meet the dental care needs of vulnerable populations.

The oral health care provided by HealthLink Dental Clinic prevents costly Emergency Department visits. Located on Street Road in Southampton, HealthLink provides free dental care to eligible working adults living in Bucks and Montgomery Counties.

What qualifies an individual to receive free care? An adult (between the ages of 18 and 65) must be a resident of Bucks or Montgomery County, working (full-time, part-time, or seasonally), and have a household income at or below 250% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). Clinic staff will work with potential patients to determine eligibility prior to the first visit.

Dental care is provided by a small, dedicated staff and by local professional volunteers. Primary dental services include preventative and restorative care, oral exams, dental hygiene, x-rays, fillings, simple extractions, and patient education. Referrals are made for patients who need more comprehensive care. Because HealthLink recognizes the interrelationship between good oral health and a patient's overall well-being, blood pressure and blood glucose level (diabetes risk) screenings are performed at each exam. Referrals for ongoing medical care are made, if needed.

"It is our goal to increase our patients' awareness of the link between good oral and medical health. Patient education is an essential component of everything that we do here at HealthLink," says Bela Amado, Dental Clinic Coordinator and Staff Hygienist.

Renovations converting four medical exam rooms into new dental operatories are underway. This expansion will allow HealthLink to serve an even greater number of local patients who do not have access to dental care. HealthLink remains open during the renovations; and appointments are available for eligible adults.

To schedule an eligibility appointment or learn more about HealthLink Dental Clinic, please call (215) 364-4247. Additional information is also available at www.healthlinkdental.org

HealthLink Dental Clinic is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide preventative and restorative dental services, along with oral health education, to contribute to the overall health of low wage-earning adults in Bucks

and Montgomery counties. HealthLink is located at 1775 Street Road in Southampton. More information is available online at www.healthlinkdental.org.

Photo: Bela Amado, RDH, PHDHP, Dental Clinic Coordinator and Staff Hygienist at HealthLink, examines x-rays for a patient receiving free dental care at the clinic.