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## **OREGON HEALTH PLAN GAP FILLED IN OREGON BY LOCAL NONPROFIT**

OHSU proposes four-year study of long-term equity outcomes for youth who receive braces from A Smile for Kids

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Redmond, Oregon—Oct. 5, 2020. A Smile for Kids announced today a major new partnership with Oregon Health and Science University** to analyze the organization’s role in creating long-term health and equity outcomes for Oregon’s underserved youth.

While many states’ health plans cover the cost of braces, Oregon does not. **The Redmond-based nonprofit is the state’s sole funder of braces treatment for low-income youth**, filling a gap in the Oregon Health Plan that would otherwise leave low-income families with few options, even in cases of severely misaligned teeth.

At an average of \$6,000 for braces, the cost of treatment is high, but the OHSU evaluation aims to provide hard data to confirm the real value of the program—that **youth who receive braces through A Smile for Kids see long-term impacts in social determinants of health such as education and employment outcomes, resilience, stable housing and mental health.**

“We already know that **youth in the program graduate from high school at a rate of 94 percent—that’s 14 percent higher than Oregon’s average**,” said Christian Moller-Andersen, executive director of A Smile for Kids. “This study will mine our data and track our youth to better understand how the program impacts other critical factors over the course of their lives.”

A Smile for Kids has served more than 700 Oregon youth since its inception in 2004. To participate, youth must complete four hours of volunteer community service each month, and maintain at least a “C” average to continue receiving treatment. After a break two years ago with its founding organization, Advantage Dental, **A Smile for Kids has pivoted to become an independent, data-driven and research-based organization with a laser-like focus on equity outcomes through orthodontics.**

“**What we see with the A Smile for Kids project is a model for other organizations**,” said Amy Wilson, Senior Evaluation Research Assistant with Oregon Health and Science University’s Evaluation Core. “By intentionally diving deeply into evaluating how a program is truly impacting lives, we will learn how the organization—and others like it—can become even more effective at changing health outcomes for underserved populations in Oregon.”

The OHSU evaluation proposes interviews and a survey of former program participants as part of both qualitative and quantitative data gathering. **Many youth in the program have experienced traumas, generational poverty, parents serving justice, and caregivers with debilitating health conditions.** The evaluation will look at outcomes related not just to the participants’ emotional, social, educational, or employment outcomes, but also whether the program affected their families around interactions with the healthcare system.

“We already see obvious impacts on the self-confidence of youth, in terms of mental health and success in school, but what are all the other impacts here?” said Moller-Andersen. “**Just how far does this investment go? Through this project with OHSU, we’re going to get to the bottom of that** and use the answers to make this program even more valuable to our state.”

**For more information about A Smile for Kids visit [asmileforkids.org](http://asmileforkids.org).**