



## NEWS RELEASE

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**Contact:** Shere Saneishi-Kim  
Director, HDS Foundation  
808-529-9209  
skim@hawaiidentalsservice.com

Nathan Hokama  
Strategic Communication Solutions  
808-226-7470  
nhokama@scsolutions-hi.com

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **A Heart Month Gift:**

#### **HDS Foundation Gives the American Heart Association a \$164,920 Grant for Medical-Dental Integration in Underserved Communities**

Honolulu, Hawaii — The American Heart Association (the Association) and the HDS Foundation are teaming up to support medical-dental integration and address health inequity in a new way.

With the support of a \$164,920 HDS Foundation grant, the Association plans to reach more than 10,000 patients in the program's first year, erasing the line between oral health care and primary care by having dental clinics become convenient sites to reach underserved communities with blood pressure screenings and to provide referrals for follow-up care with primary care providers or community health centers.

"Oral health and overall physical health are intricately linked. This new initiative is a way of bridging the two to benefit patients and to help eliminate the health disparities in underserved communities," said Dr. Diane Paloma, HDS president and CEO. "We're glad to be collaborating with the American Heart Association to make this a priority in our community."

"Successful blood pressure management requires people to regularly monitor their blood pressure and respond to changes to keep numbers under control," said Association Hawaii Division Board member Michael Lui, M.D., a neurologist. "Hypertension is known as the 'silent killer' but with proper treatment and management, you can control your blood pressure to help you live a long and healthy life. From a neurological perspective, controlling blood pressure is one of the most important controllable risk factors in preventing stroke."

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Dental staff will be trained by the Association staff to conduct blood pressure screenings for their dental patients. In addition, the Association will provide dental office staff with blood pressure education, blood pressure machines for dental office use, and at-home blood pressure monitoring cuffs to provide patients, as part of a comprehensive effort to raise awareness on the importance of maintaining healthy blood pressure and to make blood pressure screenings a standard of care at dental offices.

Hawaii is the fourth healthiest state in the nation according to a recently released ranking by United Health Care Foundation; however, Association data shows about a third — or 30.7% — of Hawaii residents have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, and 58.4% have hypertension under control. There may be many more Hawaii residents who are undiagnosed or are not managing their condition because they are not aware of the risks of the “silent killer.”

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#### **About the Hawaii Dental Service Foundation**

The Hawaii Dental Service Foundation was established in 1986 by Hawaii Dental Service to improve oral health in Hawaii. The Foundation’s oral health initiatives include programs such as Seal Away Decay, Dentist by One and Kupuna Smiles. In 2018, the Foundation established the Hawaii Dental Service Community Scholarship Program to support Hawaii students pursuing careers in dentistry or dental hygiene. The Foundation also awards grants to local non-profit organizations for programs and projects that provide oral health education, prevent oral disease, and increase access to dental care for underserved populations. Visit the Hawaii Dental Service Foundation website at [www.HDSFoundation.gives](http://www.HDSFoundation.gives).