

Funding Request:

Vulnerable adults in Louisiana—including veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, and those who are medically fragile—face significant barriers to dental care, leading to untreated disease, chronic pain, and preventable health complications. The Louisiana Donated Dental Services (DDS) program is one of the few statewide resources providing comprehensive, no-cost treatment to individuals who cannot access or afford care.

To expand and sustain these services, **the Louisiana DDS program is seeking \$90,000 in annual state funding.** DLN greatly appreciates the \$60,000 FY 2023–24 appropriation, but increased support is essential to meet growing demand. This funding will allow the program to continue providing critical care to vulnerable Louisiana residents. Without it, DLN may be forced to limit services, leaving hundreds on the waiting list without needed, often lifesaving, dental treatment.

Return on Investment:

The DDS program delivers exceptional value for the State of Louisiana. **For every \$1 invested, DLN generates an average of \$7.18 in donated dental treatment.** A modest state investment supports program coordination and administration, leveraging substantial private-sector contributions through this proven public–private partnership.

State investment in the DDS Program

- Improve overall health: Prevent or reduce complications from chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes by addressing oral health needs early.
- Reduce healthcare costs: Lower the number of emergency room visits and hospitalizations related to untreated dental disease.
- Increase access and impact: Ensure more Louisianans receive timely, life-improving dental care that would otherwise be inaccessible.
- Protect an efficient public–private partnership: Maximize state dollars by supporting a program that relies on volunteer dentists and donated services.
- This modest funding increase ensures the DDS program remains cost-effective, statewide, and life-changing for Louisiana residents in greatest need.

Why This Investment Matters:

- Leverages hundreds of volunteer Louisiana dentists and dental laboratories, delivering **on average \$316,000 in donated dental care annually.**
- Supports Louisianans who cannot afford comprehensive dental care due to age, disability, medical conditions, or gaps in Medicare, Medicaid, or VA coverage.
- Prevents serious dental disease that can cause pain, infection, difficulty eating, and worsens chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes.
- Ensures the program can accept applications statewide, reducing the current backlog of nearly 130 Louisianans waiting for care.

Donated Dental Services (DDS) Program Description

Since 1987, the Louisiana DDS program founded with support from the Louisiana Dental Association, run by DLN has provided nearly 5,700 Louisianans with \$13.3 million in donated care from 320 volunteer dentists and 75 dental labs. State funding is critical to support the DDS Program Coordinator and operations, ensuring continued access to life-changing dental care for Louisiana’s most vulnerable residents.

Louisiana Donated Dental Services (DDS) is a program of Dental Lifeline Network, a national nonprofit organization and strategic partner of the American Dental Association. For more information, visit <https://dentallifeline.org/> or contact Meredith Henry at mhenry@dentallifeline.org or 310-487-2703.