

COVID-19 Pandemic Dental Emergency Response Program

- Delta Dental of Oklahoma Foundation (DDOKF) has launched a short-term program in an effort to **divert dental patients from hospital emergency departments (EDs) during the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- Dental pain is one of the leading reasons for visits to hospital EDs nationwide.
 - The vast majority of those visits are **not life-threatening emergencies**, but are instead **desperate attempts for infection and pain relief** for a dental condition for which the patient has not been able to afford treatment.
 - Hospital EDs do not provide dental treatment. They can only treat pain/infection and advise the patient to seek treatment from a dentist for the underlying cause.
 - Often, unable to afford the dental treatment, the patient returns to the ED within days or weeks.
- DDOKF has established **short-term Dental Emergency Funds at select nonprofit, low-cost clinics in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.** These Funds can be used to help **qualifying, uninsured patients pay for emergency or urgent dental care.**
- **ED Diversion:** When people call the **Delta Dental HelpLine at 405-607-4747**, our dental navigators help connect them to a free clinic (when possible) or determine if they qualify for our Dental Emergency Fund and connect them with one of our participating nonprofit clinics.
- **ED Referral:** Hospital EDs are encouraged to **refer patients** in need of urgent dental treatment to the **Delta Dental HelpLine at 405-607-4747.**

Some important clarifications:

- The DDOKF Dental Emergency Fund can **only be used for emergency or urgent dental care** – meaning treatment that is needed in order to prevent a likely ED visit.
- It can only be used for extractions and fillings – not root canals.
- It is not a “free” dental program. It is designed to help people *afford* their treatment by covering the part of the cost the patient cannot afford.
- Program will continue as long as (1) the DDOKF Board determines is necessary to accomplish the purpose of the program and (2) funding is available.

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Dental Care HelpLine
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