
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCHD South Kent Clinic to Combine Public Health, Dental Care

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution to purchase an existing building, the former Kentwood Library at 4700 Kalamazoo SE, for use by the Kent County Health Department. This purchase will allow the Wyoming (852 47th Street) and Kentwood (1620 44th Street) satellite clinics to operate under one roof. Currently, the County rents two facilities for these clinics. Commissioners unanimously passed a second resolution, to enter into an agreement with the Michigan Community Dental Clinics, to operate at the site.

This building site allows WIC, Immunization and other clients to receive services, and the ability to refer those clients directly for dental services, all under one roof. These clients are typically uninsured, on Medicaid, or can't afford oral health care. The Community Health Needs Assessment, completed in 2011, found residents placed access to oral health ranked fifth among 44 priorities. Support from the clinic came from many oral health specialists, those in health and human services, from the education sector and other advocacy groups.

Kent County worked closely with leaders from the City of Kentwood to purchase the library, which has been vacant since 2010. In addition to the purchase, funding capital upgrades and improvements, with renovations expected to cost an estimated \$2.5 million. "We are very fortunate here in Kent County to have such generous and thoughtful foundations and private partners who stepped forward to help make this happen" said Wayman Britt, Assistant County Administrator. "More than \$567,000 came from supporters who saw a need and answered our call for help." Other funding is coming from the County General Fund and Capital Improvement Plan.

"We at the Kent County Health Department believe availability of dental services will reduce the number of emergency department visits due to dental and jaw issues, and aid in early detection of diabetes and heart disease," said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. "We anticipate more than 9,000 clients will be able to access dental care through the clinic."

The site of the South Kent Clinic is less than a half-mile from the current Kentwood public health clinic, and about 4 miles from the Wyoming clinic. It is located near two routes of The Rapid, making it accessible to those who require bus transportation. The anticipated date for the opening is spring of 2014.

Data supports the need for more dental care for those without insurance or on Medicaid. Twenty-six percent of adults in Kent County had not seen the dentist in the past year, including 48 percent of those without dental insurance, according to the Behavioral Risk Factors Survey from 2008. That same study also says sixty-five percent of Kent County children who have Medicaid insurance do not have a dental provider – a total of 22,300 children ages 10 and younger. The current supply of dentists serving low-income patients in Kent County is only 29 percent of what is needed.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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