

## **FREE CLINIC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY** **Ohio Association of Free Clinics**

### **Background**

Recently released Census data found that the number of Ohioans living without insurance had increased from 1.2 million in 2001 to almost 1.4 million in 2005. Although 2005 marked the fourth full year of growth in the national economy, poverty in Ohio increased from 11.6% in 2004 to 12.3% in 2005. Two Ohio cities—Cleveland and Cincinnati—made the list of the top ten poorest large cities in America.

The Ohio Family Health Survey, conducted in 2004, found that the number of Ohioans who lack dental, vision, mental health, or prescription medication coverage is greater than the number of Ohioans who are uninsured. This survey found that 42.7% of adults lack dental insurance.

### **What are “free clinics”? And do free clinics provide dental services?**

A free clinic facilitates the delivery of health care services through the use of volunteer health care professionals and voluntary care networks. Free clinics do not charge patients a fee, although some request a small administrative fee. If the patient cannot pay a fee, free clinics do not bill the patient or deny services. A free clinic must not receive 25% or more of its annual revenue from third-party payments. In 2005, Ohio free clinics provided more than 4,800 on-site dental visits and 965 off-site dental visits. As a consequence of limited funding, only 8 free clinics in Ohio currently provide on-site dental services, however, the need for such services is far greater.

Free clinics rely predominantly upon volunteer health care professionals and the donations of individuals and foundations to keep their doors open. Free Clinics are not federally subsidized and receive nominal general revenue fund support from the State of Ohio. Although all free clinics differ from each other with respect to their size, hours of operation, and scope of services that they provide, they share the common challenge of having insufficient funding to meet the growing unmet health care needs of Ohioans.

### **Food for Thought**

The Ohio Association of Free Clinics (“O AFC”) has asked the Ohio State Dental Board to support and promote free clinics throughout Ohio with respect to both funding and volunteer services. O AFC made a presentation to the Board at its January, 2007 Board meeting, to discuss free clinic work, and to answer questions. We encourage you to consider a donation to the free clinic. Donations could either be directed to an individual free clinic or to the Ohio Association of Free Clinics which would, in turn, distribute these funds to its member free clinics. Licensing forms would also include contact information for the O AFC in an effort to promote volunteerism.

The OAFC Board of Directors and member free clinics believe that the mission of free clinics can best be achieved by partnering with those state boards that license health care professionals. We are here to do our part to get the message out to our licensing population that there is a need for donations. We understand and are proud to know that many of you participate in various programs and provide donated services throughout the year, and we are simply providing you with another option to consider.

**What is the Ohio Association of Free Clinics?**

The Ohio Association of Free Clinics (OAFC) is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization that represents free clinics throughout Ohio. The mission of the OAFC is to advocate for high quality health services for the underserved. Using cost effective strategies, free clinics help people to get and stay well until they once again have access to health insurance or are able to pay for care. By utilizing almost 3,500 volunteers, including nearly 1,200 physicians, OAFC member clinics provided nearly 115,000 visits in 2005 to Ohio's uninsured and underinsured. Every dollar invested in free clinics brought in an average of \$10.00 worth of care due to the use of volunteers and cost-effective strategies.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.**