

## For Immediate Release

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### **Washtenaw County Dental Clinic Opening 2015** *Clinic will Offer Services for Patients with Medicaid or Low Incomes*

YPSILANTI, Mich., February 20, 2014 – Washtenaw County Public Health and Saint Joseph Mercy Health System are pleased to announce plans for a Washtenaw County Dental Clinic, slated to open in January 2015. The Dental Clinic will serve residents who have Medicaid dental coverage or who are without insurance and low income. It will be located in the Haab Building at 111 N. Huron Street in downtown Ypsilanti. At full capacity the eleven-chair clinic will serve an estimated 6,000 patients per year with 15,000 clinic visits.

“With the help of our partners – we’re thrilled to see this project moving forward,” says acting health officer Ellen Rabinowitz. “The clinic fills a void, and the impact will be tremendous. Of course, we’ll see improvements in oral health among our most vulnerable residents, but, importantly, we’ll also see related improvements in physical health, employability, reduced ER visits and so forth.”

Washtenaw County Public Health will contract with Michigan Community Dental Clinics to operate the facility. Saint Joseph Mercy Health System is generously providing space in its Haab Building. The Washtenaw Health Plan is contributing to the startup costs – as is Public Health. As a local health department, Public Health will be eligible for additional federal funds to supplement Medicaid reimbursement rates, an opportunity that will sustain the clinic into the future.

The first floor space in the Haab Building was not being actively used when Saint Joseph Mercy Health System learned of Washtenaw County Public Health's plans to open a Washtenaw County Dental Clinic.

"We're so pleased to be able to contribute to this important community program," said Michael Miller, Jr., chief mission officer, Saint Joseph Mercy Health System. "Increasing access to healthcare and working with the public health department and other community groups to promote the common good goes hand- in-hand with our mission."

The full-service dental clinic will join the Neighborhood Family Health Center, a patient-centered medical home serving many underinsured and uninsured residents in the Ypsilanti community, making the Haab Building a one-stop destination for community health care.

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### **The Need**

Poor oral health is an increasingly pressing public health issue. Poor physical health, unemployment and emergency room visits are a few of the problems associated with it. Washtenaw County is a relatively wealthy county, yet thousands of residents have no dental insurance. Thousands more have Medicaid dental coverage (18,000), but they are still unable to access services because so few providers accept it. As Medicaid expansion happens later this year in Michigan, an additional 16,000 residents will likely become eligible for dental coverage but remain unable to access care.

While several community programs provide free or low-cost dental services, they do not come close to addressing the need for these services in the community.

### **Next steps**

In the coming months, contracts will be finalized with Michigan Community Dental Clinics, which operates 22 dental clinics on behalf of local public health departments throughout Michigan, and with Saint Joseph Mercy Health System for the use of the Haab Building. Renovations will begin in the summer and continue into the fall.

### **About Washtenaw County Public Health**

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease or injury in our community. Working with community partners to promote equitable access to health care and resources for healthful living is critical part of local public health's role. For more, visit <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org> or call 734-544-6700. Public Health is located at 555 Towner Street in Ypsilanti.



### **About Saint Joseph Mercy Health System**

Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (SJMHS) is a health care organization serving six counties in southeast Michigan including Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. It includes 537-bed St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor, 443-bed St. Joseph Mercy Oakland in Pontiac, 304-bed St. Mary Mercy Livonia, 136-bed St. Joseph Mercy Livingston in Howell, 119-bed St. Joseph Mercy Port Huron and 113-bed Chelsea Community Hospital. Combined, the six hospitals are licensed for 1,726 beds, have six outpatient health centers, six urgent care facilities, more than 25 specialty centers; employ more than 14,000 individuals and have a medical staff of nearly 3,200 physicians.



SJMHS is a member of CHE Trinity Health, one of the largest Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation. It serves people and communities in 21 states from coast to coast with 84 hospitals, 95 continuing care facilities and home health and hospice programs that provide nearly 2.4 million visits annually. The organization was formed by the May 2013 consolidation of Trinity Health and Catholic Healthcare East. For more information on health services offered at Saint Joseph Mercy Health System, please visit [www.stjoeshealth.org](http://www.stjoeshealth.org).

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### **About Washtenaw Health Plan**

The mission of the Washtenaw Health Plan is to expand and assure access to health care and improve the health status of low-income, uninsured County residents. The WHP is a public-private partnership with Washtenaw County government, University of Michigan Health System, Saint Joseph Mercy Health System and other local health care providers.

Expanding Access to All



The WHP uses its resources and role in the community to strengthen the local health care safety net by maximizing access to primary care for uninsured, underinsured and other vulnerable Washtenaw County residents. Since 2007, WHP staff have coordinated the Washtenaw County Oral Health Task Force and worked on expanding access to oral health care services. For more information contact WHP at 734-544-3030 or visit [whp.ewashtenaw.org](http://whp.ewashtenaw.org)

### **About Michigan Community Dental Clinics**



Michigan Community Dental Clinics, Inc. (MCDC) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 corporation that helps create and manage dental clinics on behalf of local public health departments in Michigan. Currently, MCDC administers a network of 22 clinics that serve over 90,000 individuals statewide. MCDC's motto is "Changing lives, one smile at a time," and more information is available at <http://midental.org/>.

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