10 Ways IDA Supported Iowa Dentists During the COVID-19 Pandemic

When IDA leadership and staff adjourned the board meeting on Friday, March 13, 2020, no one imagined the turn of events that have taken place since then. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, IDA has been providing services to all dentists, hygienists, assistants, and support staff in Iowa regardless of membership status. The value of organized dentistry has never been more apparent. Here are the top 10 things IDA has done to serve the profession of dentistry in Iowa:

1. Led the COVID-19 Reopening Task Force – IDA organized and chaired the reopening task force that had representation from the Iowa Dental Board (IDB), Iowa Dental Hygienists’ Association (IDHA), UI College of Dentistry, Iowa Department of Public Health, and Delta Dental of Iowa to develop recommendations for reopening dental practices.

2. Advocated for Offices to Open on May 8 – When the IDB submitted the Guidelines for the Safe Transition Back to Practice to the governor, they included a joint letter of support from IDA and IDHA to demonstrate that dental professionals were united. On May 6, Governor Reynolds announced that dental offices could reopen on May 8, 10 days earlier than the previous proclamation would have allowed.

3. Iowa Small Business Relief Grants – When dentists were not included in the first round for the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) grants, IDA wrote a letter to the IEDA and held a call with IEDA staff to discuss this gross oversight. As of May 26, 2020, more than $2.8 million has been awarded to 122 dental offices in 45 Iowa counties.

4. Online Resources – An entire section of the IDA website is devoted to providing resources for dental offices to help navigate the fluid environment you now practice in. Information on PPE suppliers, FAQs on employment, resources to assist in opening offices, and more is available in one place.

5. Online CEUs – When IDEAS20 was canceled, IDA moved many of those educational sessions online, including mandatory education. The free infection control webinar is available for all.

6. COVID-19 Update – This daily e-newsletter was designed to be a single source of information for Iowa dentists during the pandemic. Each day this e-newsletter was sent to all Iowa dentists, hygienists, dental assistants, office managers, and others within our database during the first several months of the pandemic.

7. Legislative Efforts – The Iowa Legislature suspended the 2020 session in March, but that did not stop IDA’s legislative work. The IDA Legislative Committee continued to meet to discuss advocacy strategies on behalf of dentists for increased Medicaid reimbursement, liability relief, and other IDA legislative priorities for when the legislature reconvened on June 3.

IDA members have had exclusive access to additional services during this time, including:

1. Virtual Townhalls – To keep IDA members current and to provide the opportunity to ask questions, IDA offered four virtual townhalls. Recordings of those townhalls are available on the IDA website.

2. Free Webinars on PPP Loans and Practice Recovery – IDA members were given exclusive access to these live and on-demand webinars.

3. District Meetings – Many district dental societies canceled their spring meetings due to COVID-19. IDA worked with leaders from the Dubuque, Southwest, and Waterloo Districts to hold virtual meetings for district members. These district meetings were very well attended and allowed dentists to connect with their peers and hear valuable information.

The most impactful service that IDA leadership and staff have offered during this time is availability: availability to answer questions, listen to concerns, and direct you to resources. The IDA staff is presently working from their homes but may be reached at 515.331.2298 or info@iowadental.org.