



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Gavin Uchida named Hawaii Department of Health's dental director

HONOLULU – Gavin Uchida, DDS, MBA has been named dental director for the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) to lead programs that improve the oral health of adults and children across the state, including those in medically underserved communities.



The dental director position and long-standing oral health programs were eliminated in 2009 because of budget restrictions in the wake of the national and local recession. These are now being restored after nearly eight years through a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant.

Dr. Uchida, who is part of the DOH Family Health Services Division, will oversee the development and execution of statewide strategic initiatives that promote oral health, including the prevention and treatment of oral disease. One of his major tasks will be launching a series of statewide sessions, including those held on the neighbor islands, to gather input to develop a statewide oral health strategic plan.

“As a practicing dentist, I see firsthand the high rates of dental disease in our state,” he said. “I decided I wanted to actively help on a larger scale, and joining the Department of Health was an opportunity for me to be part of a team of professionals who contribute to a better Hawaii by working to elevate the health and wellness of our community as a whole.”

Dr. Uchida added, “Through teamwork with dentists, medical professionals and community leaders, I believe we can create the policies needed to reduce disease and promote oral health, some of these include incorporating oral health education into early childhood settings and experimenting with teledentistry as a way of increasing access to care.”

Danette Wong Tomiyasu, DOH deputy director of Health Resources said, “Dr. Uchida’s broad professional experience will be a tremendous asset to public health as we further develop and implement the state’s comprehensive goals of improving and increasing oral health data collection, community and school-based dental disease prevention, and access to preventive services for Hawaii residents with lower income and children enrolled in Medicaid.”

Dr. Uchida, certified by the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry, has been a pediatric dentist in Hawaii since 2005 with practices on Oahu and Hawaii Island. Born and raised in Honolulu, Dr. Uchida is a graduate of St. Louis School. He earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Washington and doctorate from the University of California-San Francisco, and completed his residency in pediatric dentistry from the University of Texas-San Antonio. He also earned an MBA from Duke University.

The East Honolulu resident is a board member of the Hawaii Dental Lifeline Network, a statewide non-profit focused on providing dental care to medically compromised adults. In addition, he regularly volunteers in non-profit and federal government humanitarian medical/dental missions to rural locations in Central America, the Caribbean, Polynesia, and Southeast Asia.

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