

## **Paratransit Services Receives Pediatric Dentistry “Barrier Buster” Honors**

*Seattle, Washington – May 20, 2015.* University of Washington Department of Pediatric Dentistry (UWDPD) has selected Bremerton nonprofit company Paratransit Services as one of only two organizations to receive its first “Barrier Buster” awards. The other recipient selected was Seattle-King County Public Health Outreach. This new award recognizes organizations who work to overcome barriers to oral health for low-income children in Washington State

“These recipients made a positive difference to our low-income patients’ oral health,” said UWDPD Social Worker Heather Marks. “They have made a special effort in working with us over the years to remove barriers to care that would have kept hundreds of Medicaid-eligible children state-wide from getting to a dentist for preventive and restorative care. As a social worker, a major focus of my job is to help families gain access to care—to overcome barriers.”

As a transportation scheduler for the Washington State Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program, Paratransit Services plays an important part in facilitating transportation to the UW Center for Pediatric Dentistry in Seattle for Medicaid-eligible children who live outside King County. Many of these children, some of whom are disabled or who have profound dental disease, are unable to get appropriate treatment closer to home due to the lack of dental facilities equipped to treat them, or a shortage of facilities that accept Medicaid patients. An additional complication was a “Catch 22” situation where these children would only be eligible to receive transportation assistance for out-of-county treatment if they were referred by a local dentist, but it is because of the lack of availability of local dentists to see these patients that the transportation assistance was needed.

To address this dilemma, Paratransit Services NEMT Customer Service Supervisor Terry May toured the Center for Pediatric Dentistry in Seattle last year and met with staff there to explore ways of removing roadblocks to dental care access, a goal shared by both organizations. This was a very successful collaboration, as protocols were established within NEMT and UWDPD program guidelines that streamlined the scheduling process for out-of-county children who need the types of treatment provided at the Center.

During a public outreach event held at the UWDPD Magnuson Park facility in Seattle on May 20, Terry May from Paratransit Services, and Daphne Pie, Manager of Seattle-King County Public Health Outreach were presented with “Barrier Buster” awards in recognition of their “Outstanding Leadership” in helping to overcome barriers to children’s oral health care. Joining Heather Marks for the presentation ceremony were Joel H. Berg, Dean of the UW School of Dentistry; and Rebecca L. Slayton, Chair, Department of Pediatric Dentistry.



*Left to right: Joel H. Berg, Dean of the UW School of Dentistry; Daphne Pie, Manager of Seattle-King County Public Health Outreach; Heather Marks, University of Washington Center for Pediatric Dentistry Social Worker; Terry May, Paratransit Services NEMT Regional Supervisor; and Rebecca L. Slayton, Chair, Department of Pediatric Dentistry.*