FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 4, 2013

SCHUYLER CENTER LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE DENTAL HEALTH

ALBANY, NY. – The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy today announced a comprehensive campaign to improve dental health in New York.

“The financial and human costs associated with dental disease, especially in children, are severe and lasting,” said Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center. “This is a significant health issue that does not get the attention of policymakers because the impact is often hidden by poverty and health disparities.”

“Our goal is to focus the attention of policymakers and the public on strategies to improve dental health,” Breslin said.

The new campaign, supported by grants from the New York State Health Foundation and the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, will focus on public education and creating prevention and treatment strategies in communities that are currently underserved.

“We know what it takes to improve dental health,” Breslin said. “It is a shame that in the year 2013, all areas of the state don’t have the proper resources to address this problem.”

Tooth decay, and the resultant pain and suffering, is still the most common chronic childhood disease. Dental disease inhibits a child’s ability to learn, grow, and thrive, while also increasing Medicaid and other health care costs. There is also evidence that connects poor dental health in adults with chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

While New York State has made great strides improving dental health, these statistics mask disparities in cavity rates by income groups. For instance, high-income children and adults have better oral health, while low-income people have higher rates of cavities and poor access to dental care.

“The financial and human costs associated with dental disease are enormous and, too often, the most vulnerable children and families bear the biggest burden of poor oral health,” said James R. Knickman, President and CEO of the New York State Health Foundation. “Most people are shocked to hear that children are five times more likely to suffer from tooth decay than from asthma—there’s very low awareness of this largely preventable, treatable problem. We’re excited to work with the Schuyler Center and the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York to get the word out and ultimately improve dental health in New York State.”
“There is a clear and urgent need to improve the dental health of young children, especially very young children who are living in poverty,” Ann F. Monroe, president of the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, said. “Almost 100 percent of dental disease is completely preventable, which is why it is so critically important to provide dental education and treatment to underserved children and families in our communities. We look forward to working with the Schuyler Center and the New York State Health Foundation on this important initiative.”

For more information on the campaign visit www.scaany.org

# # #