



# University of Texas Health San Antonio School of Dentistry (UTHSA) Enhancing Systems of Care for Children with Medical Complexity

**Project Overview:** The Phil and Karen Hunke Special Care Clinic within the UT Health San Antonio School of Dentistry provides comprehensive oral health care to children with intellectual and developmental disabilities with complex medical histories. The project trains dental and dental hygiene students, residents, and active community providers to deliver care alongside interprofessional medical practitioners. This innovative approach to caring for children with medical complexity (CMC) and families is transformative in nature—enabling current and future medical and dental providers throughout Texas to safely and effectively care for CMC and their families. This project supports the integration of oral health within a broader primary health care delivery system, improving access to oral health care for CMC populations and in underserved communities throughout the state. Oral health care is coordinated with each patient’s medical, and other care providers, using a team-based approach to care, and working with each patient’s family/caregivers.

## Lead Organization

UT Health San Antonio School of Dentistry

## Partner Organizations

UT Health Dentistry Phil and Karen Hunke Special Care Clinic

Texas Department of Health and Human Services,

Gordan Hartman Family Foundation: Multi-Access Center

## Family Leads

Family Advisory Committee members

## Principal Investigators

Micaela Gibbs, DDS, MHA, University of Texas Health Dentistry San Antonio

Jeffrey Hicks, BS, DDS, University of Texas Health Dentistry San Antonio

Jennifer Farrell, Director, Special Needs Clinic, Project Community Advisory Committee

## Geographic Region

South and Central Texas

## Project Period

August 2022-July 2027

## Contact

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## Population Served

The Special Care Clinic treats children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who also have complex medical needs. Within the ethnic makeup of the Texas population, patients are majority ethnically Hispanic, but patients are welcomed from all racial and ethnic groups. Patients come from diverse geographic backgrounds—from urban areas in San Antonio to rural settings in South and Central Texas.

## Collaborations

The UTHSA School of Dentistry partners with the Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Professions and the Institution’s Medical Arts and Research Center to create an interprofessional and interdisciplinary collaborative and interdisciplinary project. The School of Dentistry utilizes social work and behavioral health experts to listen to, advise, and guide CMC and families/caregivers on the CMC’s general functionality/quality of life and family well-being. Patient, family, and community service agency members serve in formal advisory capacity to the project leaders and advise on clinic operations, care delivery, and care accommodations

## Family Engagement

CMC family members are key contributors to the Advisory Committee and the project leaders have engaged family members as leaders in project activities. Through participation on the Advisory Committee, family members of CMC are identifying interventions and policies leading to improved quality of life and protective factors, such as, supportive and stable relationships, positive parenting practices, and healthy family dynamics. Families of CMC who serve on the Advisory Committee are enrolled as consultants and attend committee meetings virtually or in-person. Selected patients and family members are eligible for leadership and advocacy training by organizations experienced with improving the lives of CMC and their families.

## Project Aims

- Conduct a health equity assessment of the CMC target population to identify challenges and barriers that CMC and their families face in accessing services in their current system of care.
- Develop collaborations with CMC and families/ caregivers, stakeholders, medical practices, community organizations, and state entities.
- Establish a care clinic and clinical patient support system for CMC in the School of Dentistry.
- Train medical, nursing, nursing practitioner, physician assistant, dental and dental hygiene students, and dental residents in didactic and clinical settings to provide care side-by-side and collaboratively for CMC.

## Evaluation Overview

The evaluation plan for the project is based on Kirkpatrick's Hierarchy of Educational Outcomes. Indirect outcomes include trainee/participant satisfaction, documentation of implementation and/or products (schedules, materials, syllabi, numbers of programs conducted and participants attending programs), and short-term demonstrations of knowledge enhancements by trainees, (measured by written pre-and post-training tests). Direct results include evidence of infrastructure changes (e.g., enhancement of care delivered to CMC), enrollment of families of CMC as active participants, and/or faculty development initiatives or changes in workplace environment or operations. Patient and family surveys measure satisfaction with care, inclusion in care planning, and care outcomes.

## Notable Features

- **Universal, interdisciplinary curriculum:** Provides interprofessional didactic and clinical learning/care provision integrated within the broader primary care delivery system for dental students, general dentistry and pediatric dentistry residents, dental hygiene students and medical, nursing, nurse practitioner and physician assistant students.
- **Existing partnerships:** Experience working within an innovative model for care integration based on an existing partnership with the Gordon Hartman Family.
- **Family leadership:** Family members of CMC hold leadership roles and drive advances in areas of clinic operations, identifying essential care plan features, and establishing outcome measures that matter to families.

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“Children with intellectual and developmental disorders also commonly have complex medical histories and considerable, unmet oral health needs. Our project establishes the Phil and Karen Hunke Special Care Clinic and addresses the needs of these underserved groups and trains students and residents to provide effective and collaborative oral health care to alleviate suffering from disease now and in the future as independent but interdisciplinary providers.”

– Micaela Gibbs, DDS, MHA, Project Director, UT Health San Antonio School of Dentistry, San Antonio, Texas

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