Community Impact

The St. Luke’s Dental Health Center (DHC) was organized by concerned area dentists to address unmet dental needs of low-income children throughout East Central Iowa. St. Luke’s Hospital agreed to be the “home” of the DHC, donating space, providing administrative leadership and fiscal management, and offering in-kind clinical support like equipment sterilization. 340B savings makes St. Luke’s support possible in addition to philanthropic donations.

Today, St. Luke’s DHC is a safety-net dental clinic providing comprehensive dental care for children through age 18 from low-income families and for people with developmental disabilities. Comprehensive dental care includes:

- **Preventive** – exams, x-rays, cleaning, fluoride, dental sealants
- **Operative** – fillings, stainless steel caps, dental pulp treatments
- **Oral surgery** – baby tooth and some adult tooth extractions
- **Endodontics** – some root canal treatments on adult teeth
- **Outreach** – dental screenings, sealants, and fluoride varnish for children in local school classrooms

St. Luke’s DHC patients are considered high-risk. About 65% of new patients have dental decay. **Children from low-income families make up approximately 90% of the DHC patient population.** The DHC is the only local access program available for oral health care in Linn and surrounding counties. The next closest access program is in Waterloo, more than 50 miles away.