



## Children's Health Fund

### **CONTACT:**

Caitlin McFeely

cmcfeely@chfund.org

Office: 212-535-9400 x 294

Cell: 917-208-7215

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **MetLife Foundation Awards Children's Health Fund \$500,000 Grant to Support Oral Health for Kids**

**NEW YORK** (November 1, 2011) – Children's Health Fund (CHF) is pleased to announce MetLife Foundation's support of its national oral health initiative, *Healthy Kids, Healthy Smiles*.

MetLife Foundation's \$500,000 grant will help support oral health care for low-income and homeless children and families primarily via mobile dental clinics in New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas and Washington, D.C. The funding will support a 65 percent increase in services over the previous year.

"Children living in poverty face tremendous barriers in access to dental health care. If left untreated, tooth decay can become extremely painful, making it difficult for children to concentrate in class, and can even lead to missed school days," said CHF Executive Director Karen Redlener. "MetLife Foundation's generous donation will help ensure that thousands of children have the dental care they need to prevent these painful and potentially dangerous oral health conditions."

CHF's mobile dental clinics travel in tandem with mobile medical clinics to community-based sites, such as schools, public housing, early education programs and homeless shelters to provide care directly to children in need. As part of CHF's coordinated and comprehensive service delivery, children receive health education and preventive oral health care, in addition to emergency dental services.

"MetLife is pleased to support the Healthy Kids, Healthy Smiles initiative to help increase access to oral health care for children and families," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Not only will patients receive timely and preventive oral health care, the initiative will also help develop good dental hygiene habits."

The grant will also help establish a training program for CHF medical providers to improve oral health screening procedures and increase fluoride varnish application, an innovative way to increase access to preventive oral health for children.

Oral health services are an integral part of comprehensive health care. Dental caries, also known as tooth decay, is the most common chronic childhood disease, and can affect eating, speaking,

self-esteem and learning. In extreme cases, it can cause severe infection, requiring hospitalization. An estimated 51 million hours of school are missed each year due to dental problems\*.

Many children living in poverty lack access to oral health care services due to transportation, insurance and other barriers. In the United States, tooth decay impacts 25 percent of preschoolers and 50 percent of youth aged 12 to 15, and rates are even higher for children living in poverty.

###

### **Children's Health Fund**

Founded in 1987 by singer/songwriter Paul Simon and pediatrician/advocate Irwin Redlener, MD, Children's Health Fund (CHF) is the nation's leading pediatric provider of mobile-based health care for homeless and low-income children and their families. CHF's mission is to bring health care directly to those in need through the development and support of innovative medical programs, response to public health crises, and the promotion of guaranteed access to health care for all children. CHF currently has 50 mobile medical clinics serving hundreds of locations across the country. Over the past 23 years, the organization has supported more than two million health care visits for disadvantaged children, often in places where doctors and health care providers are in short supply. For more information about CHF, visit [www.childrenshealthfund.org](http://www.childrenshealthfund.org).

### **About MetLife Foundation**

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to carry on MetLife's longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation is committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Through programs focusing on empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities, MetLife Foundation increases access and opportunities for people of all ages. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has made more than \$500 million in grants and \$75 million in program related investments. For more information visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org)

\* Dental, Oral and Craniofacial Data Resource Center Oral Health, 2002 Annual Report