

Pay it Forward with Smiles 4 Canada: Providing Orthodontic Treatment for Low-Income Young Canadians

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A smile is a very powerful thing. As orthodontists, we are familiar with the benefits of an aesthetic, functional, and confidence-inspiring smile and dentition. Unfortunately, too many young people do not have the financial resources to receive orthodontic treatment for their malocclusions.



Smiles 4 Canada is a non-profit program run by the Canadian Foundation for the Advancement of Orthodontics, the charitable foundation of the Canadian Association of Orthodontics. This program assists deserving low-income youth to help receive orthodontic treatment. The pilot program has been accepting applications in all four provinces in Atlantic Canada, where a Regional Committee of enthusiastic and committed volunteers has been established to evaluate applications and coordinate treatment with local orthodontists. As a result, we are pleased to have our first patients starting treatment! The program has also recently expanded and is now accepting applications from across Canada. Application forms and full details are available through the website: www.smiles4canada.ca.

Children from low-income families can apply before their 14th birthday. The application form includes information about the family's finances to confirm they meet the Canadian Federal Low Income Cut-offs. In addition, digital photos submitted by the family, along with a short screening form completed by their dentist, are used to assess the severity of the malocclusion and confirm adequate dental health and hygiene. Finally, a personal statement from the applicant and a reference letter from a member of the community provide insight into the candidate's character and motivation for seeking treatment. All of these materials are carefully reviewed by a Regional Committee to ensure the most deserving and motivated individuals are selected for the program.

Successful applicants are matched with a local participating orthodontist. The orthodontist will have an opportunity to meet the candidate and their family for a comprehensive examination and to discuss treatment options. If both parties agree to proceed, the orthodontist would then provide treatment free of charge. Successful applicants would pay a small administration fee to Smiles 4 Canada, generally less than 10% of a complete course of treatment.

Smiles 4 Canada is an excellent opportunity to spread goodwill in your community and draw the public's attention to the benefits of orthodontics and your role as a specialist. Plus, you'll enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you have made a positive change in the life of a young person in need. Care is provided on a voluntary basis by orthodontists, like you, who are willing to give of their time.

Please consider offering your services for the program, and help spread the word so we can reach as many deserving candidates as possible. We are hoping every orthodontist will be willing to help at least one child per year. For more information, visit www.smiles4canada.ca. To volunteer, or pose questions that aren't answered on the website, please e-mail us at administration@smiles4canada.ca.

Together we can build something great! Help us put a smile on a child's face and see how together we can change lives. ▶