

# SAID History

The **Southern Association of Institutional Dentists** is an organization that was begun by Dr. **Gerald Bensberg**, who at that time was the Director of the Attendant Training Project (a five year NIMH supported project sponsored by the Southern Region Education Board). Dr. Bensberg invited dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants and other interested professionals who served in facilities for the mentally retarded throughout the fifteen (15) southern states to participate in a seminar to consider ways of delivering better dental care to the institutionalized mentally retarded population. This seminar was held in April 1966 in Houston, Texas and was entitled "**Meeting the Needs of the Mentally Retarded**". The original seminar was attended by twenty three (23) institutional dentists, one (1) dental hygienist, two (2) nurses, and a pediatrician. These attendees represented twenty six (26) institutions in thirteen (13) southern states.

Since 1966, **SAID** has grown in scope and membership, and today boasts an active membership of over 300 persons representing twenty nine (29) states, including California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Canada. Over sixty three (63) institutions and three (3) dental schools, who provide services to both institutional and community based clients, are represented by this organization. The scope of **SAID** has changed to include not only the developmentally disabled client, but also the mentally ill client. **SAID** is the only organization in the United States that deals specifically with the dental needs of the institutionalized client. Its membership is comprised of dental professionals working full time in institutions or professionals who devote a large portion of their time treating the developmentally disabled, mental ill and/or otherwise medically compromised client. Members of this organization represent institutional dentistry on local, state, and national committees that write legislation which regulates the practice of dentistry at all levels, including the US Surgeon General's Conference on Health Disparities and Mental Retardation. The organization has written and continues to regularly update a set of educational modules for dental professionals engaged in the care of patients with disabilities. These modules are available free of charge and are used throughout the US and Canada to educate students, residents and graduate dental professionals.

