

Tennessee State Oral Health Plan

Final Annual Update – August 2022

Introduction

September 1, 2017 marked the initial phase of implementing Tennessee’s first statewide, comprehensive oral health plan. This plan supports the mission of the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), “to protect, promote, and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee.”

Commissioner of Health, Dr. John Dreyzehner, stated, “The State oral health plan offers a blueprint for improving the health of the people of Tennessee by framing the issue of dental disease and prioritizing four key areas for addressing oral health in the state.” Those focus areas are:

- Monitoring Dental Disease in Tennessee,
- Oral Health Education and Advocacy,
- Prevention, and
- Oral Health Resources and Workforce.

A number of recommendations from these focus areas were identified as having the potential for efficient implementation during this first year. Over the course of the last 5 years, Oral Health Services (OHS) staff has been diligent to identify and initiate new, while also fostering existing, working relationships with partners and stakeholders to fulfill the obligation to implement this plan over the course of the next five years.

Below is a report on the outcome of those efforts and accomplishments as we conclude the final year of Tennessee’s first State Oral Health Plan.

Monitoring Dental Disease in Tennessee

- Recommendation 1: Develop a Tennessee oral health data source grid specific for the state

Collection and verification of existing national and state-wide data was compiled and the oral health resource grid containing national and state-wide was completed. This is updated annually.

The oral health resource grid was updated and posted to the [OHS website](#).

- Recommendation 2: Caries Risk Assessment on all patients
This initiative has been deferred to the 2022 State Oral Health plan.
- Recommendation 3: Research and review best practices for an oral health surveillance system

The Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) model was identified as a best practice for proposed surveillance plans. Most states used the Basic Screening Survey (BSS) tool, or a modified version of the tool, to gather surveillance data on target populations.

OHS researched surveillance models and established a survey committee for planning.

This work will continue as part of the 2022 State Oral Health plan.

- Recommendation 4: Develop TDH surveillance system to monitor the Tennessee Cancer Registry and craniofacial health in Tennessee
Contacts were made to collaborate on existing cancer surveillance and monitoring efforts. The State's Cancer Plan for 2018-2020 was completed and OHS was added to the workgroup for collaboration.

Oral Health Education and Advocacy

- Recommendation 1: Raise dental provider awareness of their role in substance abuse prevention

The TDH had National Safety Council Drug cards printed and distributed statewide; information placard provides Doctor/Dentist information as well as Patient information.

OHS continues to provide information and monitoring of clinical public health dental providers across the state, providing on-going continuing education and awareness on this topic.

- Recommendation 2: Work with existing tobacco prevention programs for public awareness of the effects of tobacco in the oral cavity

In February 2018 OHS applied for and received funding from the TC2 for “Tobacco Prevention and Cessation” project. The project addressed the cancer priority area of Primary Prevention of Cancer. Grant funding made the purchase of educational materials and resources that have been distributed statewide possible. These materials have been distributed for use within the School Based Dental Prevention Program (SBDPP) and county public health dental clinics. The resources are suited for use in community projects and have been shared with other programs state-wide. OHS staff participated in several community projects to educate youth on the effects of tobacco on oral health.

- Recommendation 3: Work with community partners to increase public awareness of the impact of diet and sugary drinks on oral health

OHS called a team of experts together to develop nutritional messaging and materials for children:

- “Water Rules! Rethink Your Drink! Skip sugary drinks – they are the #1 source of added sugar in your diet,” and
- “Snack the Rainbow! Snack a fruit and veggie rainbow of color every day for a healthy smile.”

These materials were distributed to 13 regions statewide.

Oral Health Services is in the early stages of establishing a working relationship with TDH Gold Sneaker Initiative to expand this project. Among other focus areas, the Gold Sneaker Initiative encourages age-appropriate nutrition and physical activity in young children.

Oral Health Services is among the diverse membership of the Middle Tennessee Oral health Coalition (MTOHC). Project materials were also distributed to the coalition members for use and distribution among their respective programs.

- Recommendation 4: Work with chronic disease prevention programs to develop messaging and an education course for healthcare providers
Year 1: Initial efforts will continue with participation in bi-monthly conference calls with the TDH Health Promotion Program to determine messages and/or education courses needed for healthcare providers statewide.
- Recommendation 5: Highlight integrated care models, specifically the Meharry Interprofessional Collaboration Model

Prevention

- Recommendation 1: Organize state-wide information and support meeting with community stakeholders to raise awareness of the benefits of community water fluoridation
Oral Health Services developed and distributed a Community Water Fluoridation information brochure for public use. The brochure was designed to educate diverse target populations, including policy-makers, laypersons, and water treatment personnel. The brochure is accessible on the OHS website and is available in both English and Spanish languages.

The TDH Community Water Fluoridation Workgroup presented a Workgroup Report to the Commissioner of Health in October 2017. This comprehensive report included national and state information and data and addressed the key factors of community water fluoridation as they pertain to Tennessee.

OHS identified a funding opportunity for community water systems to replace aging or install new equipment for fluoridation of community water. The *"Building Capacity for Oral*

Health Fluoridation Equipment in Local Communities” funding opportunity was offered by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), in collaboration with the CDC in October 2017. OHS worked with the Tennessee Association of Utility Districts (TAUD) to increase awareness of this funding opportunity statewide. An announcement was placed on the Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) website. MTAS provides technical assistance to municipal governments in Tennessee.

OHS continues to foster a partnership with the TAUD, the state component of the American Water Works Association. This partnership with TAUD affords the TDH numerous opportunities to serve as a resource and advocate for water systems and facility personnel statewide.

OHS was represented at the August 2018 business meeting, and regional dental directors have had the opportunity to attend quarterly meetings as schedules allow. These meetings provide an opportunity for networking and fostering support between the two professions. These platforms provide an opportunity to recognize the efforts of our public health partners as they provide safe drinking water to the citizens of Tennessee. To date, certificates of appreciation and recognition, issued by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), the CDC and the American Dental Association, have been presented to recipients.

OHS hosted a Community Water Fluoridation train-the-trainer event on November 3, 2017 in Nashville. Training was provided by the American Fluoridation Society. Participants were invited from a comprehensive list of partners statewide including water utility operators/managers, public and private agencies, insurance, professional organizations, and others.

Oral Health Services worked with the Tennessee Public Health Association (TPHA) to include a Community Water Fluoridation presentation as part of the agenda for the three grand division meetings held statewide in April 2018. Attendees heard national and state information on the topic of community water fluoridation. The CDC 2016 Water Fluoridation Quality Awards were presented to water utility personnel and elected officials who had been invited to participate in this portion of the program.

Oral Health continues to support and educate the public and agencies about the benefits of water fluoridation.

- Recommendation 2: Encourage greater use of sealants by dental providers in order to prevent pit and fissure caries in permanent molar teeth of children

DentaQuest increased monetary incentives for providers offering SDF, sealants, and fluoride varnish.

- Recommendation 3: Advocate for the usage of Silver Diamine Fluoride and provide education on its effectiveness as a preventative measure, specifically utilizing the University of Tennessee Health Science Center Silver Diamine Fluoride model

OHS worked to include SDF as one of the components of the School-Based Dental Prevention Program in 2018. Information was submitted to the Tennessee Board of Dentistry, outlining the protocol.

Since the implementation, OHS continued providing SDF treatment as one of the components of the School-Based Dental Prevention Program. By the end of Fiscal Year 2022, over 3,900 students received treatment on a total of 14,767 teeth since the implementation of SDF in our program.

- Recommendation 4: Expand efforts to adopt the *Tooth Wisdom Get Smart About Your Mouth Workshops* for the elderly population
For this current fiscal year, the Tennessee General Assembly appropriated \$85,000 to TDH, for the sole purpose of providing a grant to the Dental Lifeline Network to be used for a statewide Donated Dental Services (DDS) program. The DDS program provides direct services to people with disabilities or who are elderly that have no access to dental care.

OHS participated in a partnership discussion with Smile on 60+ program to help provide services for uninsured adults over age 60.

OHS began offering dental services in Lawrence and Maury counties for Smile on 60+ participants. This program helps provide dental services and transportation resources for uninsured adults over the age of 60.

Since the end of funding for Smile on 60+ in 2022, OHS has continued the partnership to participate in the next cycle of this program, "Smile on 65+"

- Recommendation 5: Advocate the "lift the lip" and fluoride varnish campaigns for medical providers

OHS collaborated with DentaQuest to create "lift the lip" brochures for educational purposes.

Oral Health Resources and Workforce

- Recommendation 1: Map existing providers/activity/services of oral health efforts for public and provider use

Dental resources were identified and verified statewide; additional resources were also accessed to cross reference and identify other resources for mapping. TDH project personnel were identified to create a map.

Dental resources were updated and the map and provider list was added to OHS website- Information available on OHS website- [Dental Care for Tennesseans](#)

OHS presented information to the Health Disparities Task Force in 2020 and the resources were shared with external partners

- Recommendation 2: Actively seek funding for TDH dental clinics in order to expand the targeted population to include uninsured adults and partner with Safety Net Clinics to expand their oral health reach

OHS applied for federal grant funding in March of 2018. The funding opportunity was offered from HRSA, Grants to States to Support Oral Health Workforce Activities. This grant application was denied due to insufficient data for Tennesseans, validating the

need for improved data collection to support future efforts to broaden services to target populations moving forward.

OHS submitted a grant proposal to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the funding opportunity State Actions to Improve Oral Health Outcomes in May 2018. The application was recommended for approval and has been placed on a wait list for funding.

TDH/OHS's pilot project carved out funding for a public-private partnership for patients to continue their care into the private sector. The project was approved and ready to get off the ground in FY 2020, but with COVID -19, funds were stricken from last budget review.

In 2022, OHS applied for a HRSA grant fund expansion of dental care to prenatal and diabetic patients at several sites in the East and Northeast regions. Grant funding was denied due to proposed project goals, objectives, and outcomes not being clearly defined and the objectives not being specific and measurable.

- Recommendation 3: Request TDH, Health Related Boards collect practicing status of dentists and hygienists during licensure and license renewal

Meetings and correspondence with administrative staff of TDH Health Related Boards and the Board of Dentistry occurred that to a proposal that will collect initial workforce data on both dentists and dental hygienists as part of the licensing (initial and renewal) process. OHS submitted a letter to go before the Board stating the proposed method to obtain workforce data. Upon receiving the Board's approval, OHS worked to move forward with this effort.

Initial workforce data on both dentists and dental hygienists as part of the licensing (initial and renewal) process by the Board started being collected in November of 2018.

OHS continues to gather and analyze workforce data on both dentists and dental hygienists as part of the licensing (initial and renewal) process by the Board.

- Recommendation 4: Raise awareness of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings*

OHS staff worked with the TDH webmaster to modify the OHS website to include a new section, State Oral Health Plan. This section houses information developed to meet this recommendation, as well as Recommendation 5 (below). Providing this information in this public forum and encouraging partners and stakeholders to include a link to this information on their respective websites will serve to raise awareness on this topic. Access the information here: [Oral Health Services - Infection Control](#).

- Recommendation 5: Raise awareness of the American Dental Association (ADA) Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry Guidelines
As mentioned above, a new section on OHS website now includes information on the topic of Evidence-Based Dentistry Guidelines. The information includes links to the ADA resources and can be accessed at: [Oral Health Services - Evidence-Based Dentistry](#).

Information is available on our website: [Oral Health Services -Evidence Based Dentistry](#).