

# Tennessee State Oral Health Plan

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## Annual Update – August 2021

### 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 4 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 Year 4.

### Monitoring Dental Disease in Tennessee

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

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

- Recommendation 2: Caries Risk Assessment on all patients
- Recommendation 3: Research and review best practices for an oral health surveillance system  
OHS researched surveillance models and established a survey committee for planning. This initiative has been deferred for consideration in the next State Oral Health plan.
- Recommendation 4: Develop TDH surveillance system to monitor the Tennessee Cancer Registry and craniofacial health in Tennessee  
Oral Health Services was added to the TC2 workgroup for the latest State Cancer Plan.

## Oral Health Education and Advocacy

- Recommendation 1: Raise dental provider awareness of their role in substance abuse prevention  
Initiative completed in Year 1.
- Recommendation 2: Work with existing tobacco prevention programs for public awareness of the effects of tobacco in the oral cavity  
Initiative completed in Year 1.
- Recommendation 3: Work with community partners to increase public awareness of the impact of diet and sugary drinks on oral health  
Initiative completed in Year 1.
- Recommendation 4: Work with chronic disease prevention programs to develop messaging and an education course for healthcare providers  
Initiative completed in Year 1.
- 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  
Initiative completed in Year 1.
- 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 continued providing SDF treatment as one of the components of the School-Based Dental Prevention Program. By the end of Fiscal Year 2021, 3,193 students received treatment on a total of 12,977 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  
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.
- 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  
Information available on OHS website- [Dental Care for Tennesseans](#)
- 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.  
TDH/OHS's pilot project carved out funding for a public-private partnership for patients to continue their care into the private sector. A successful teledentistry pilot project was completed in the Upper Cumberland region.
- Recommendation 3: Request TDH, Health Related Boards collect practicing status of dentists and hygienists during licensure and license renewal  
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*  
Initiative completed in Year 1. Information is available on our website: [Oral Health Services -Infection Control](#).
- Recommendation 5: Raise awareness of the American Dental Association (ADA) Center for Evidence-Based Dentistry Guidelines  
Initiative completed in Year 1. Information is available on our website: [Oral Health Services -Evidence Based Dentistry](#).