



2019 Priority Issues

We envision Texas as a state where every person is known to enjoy optimal oral health as part of his/her total well-being through individual and shared community responsibility where:

- ❖ Education and prevention are priorities;
- ❖ Education, prevention and treatment are available, accessible, affordable, timely, and culturally appropriate;
- ❖ Community solutions are shared among patients, parents, providers, employers, insurers, and government; and
- ❖ Collaboration with government, higher education, public and private sector ensures resources, supportive public policy, quality care, advocacy, and patient education.

Objectives

- Increase oral health literacy in Texas through the development and dissemination of linguistically and culturally appropriate educational materials.
- Change perceptions regarding oral health and disease so that oral health becomes an integral component of health policies and programs in Texas and is accepted as a component of overall health and well-being.
- Engage in activities using evidence-based science effectively to improve oral health in all Texas citizens.
- Remove known barriers to oral health services to increase access to comprehensive oral health care for all Texans.
- Build an effective health infrastructure that meets the oral health needs of all and integrates oral health effectively into overall health.
- Use public-private partnerships to improve the oral health of those who still suffer disproportionately from oral disease.

Policy Priorities

- Support national advocacy efforts to revise the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) policy to clarify that medically necessary oral health care, including essential, non-routine dental procedures can be covered by Medicare. *This would not expand coverage beyond what the Medicare statute allows. To the contrary, it would uphold the general statutory exclusion for basic, routine dental care while fulfilling Congress' goal of covering medically necessary health care, including oral health care.*
- Support policy change leading to improved oral health outcomes for Medicaid eligible adults with disabilities benefiting individuals, families, communities, and the state.

- Support and promote community water fluoridation, which adjusts existing fluoride levels in public drinking water systems to a level that reduces tooth decay through a statewide education campaign.
- Support and promote interprofessional practice (IPP) integration to increase collaborative efforts between oral health professionals, medical providers, nurses, social workers and other stakeholders to promote overall health and well-being for all Texans.
- Support funding to maintain the statewide Repository of Oral Health Data Evaluations and Outcomes (ROHDEO) to measure all at-risk populations in Texas.
- Support the expansion and utilization of existing workforce to provide preventive oral health care, education and referral in underserved areas and populations
- Support changing Section 262.1515 Delegation of Duties to Dental Hygienists Practicing in Certain Facilities in the Occupations Code, Title 3. Health Professions, Subtitle D. Dentistry, Chapter 262. Regulation of Dental Hygienists, Subchapter D. Practice by license Holder to “health facilities” instead of laundry listing different facilities where dental hygienists are able to provide preventive services up to six months prior to a comprehensive dental examination by a dentist. [Health facilities](#) include hospitals, rural health clinics, nursing and assisted living centers, community health centers and private medical offices.
- Support Medicaid reimbursement for preventive oral health care and education during pregnancy and up to 2 months post-partum for all Medicaid eligible women, especially those in rural and underserved areas of the state.
- Support legislation to amend the Texas Health & Safety Code to ensure that local residents, parents and health professionals have ample time to share their views or concerns before a community makes a final decision about water fluoridation. This promotes transparency and democracy within local communities. The Code should:
 - Provide a minimum of a 90-day notice to the local residents;
 - Indicate which health/medical officials were consulted before reaching the decision to start or stop water fluoridation; and
 - Provide a plan for the alternative health programs or measures that will be implemented to ensure that tooth decay rates do not increase if water fluoridation is discontinued.

The Texas Oral Health Coalition believes that all Texans should have equal opportunity to achieve good oral and overall health throughout their lives.

Questions? Contact us at info@txohc.org or 432-413-8843.

