

Washington Dental Service Foundation

Washington Dental Service (WDS) Foundation has a clear mission: *eliminate oral disease and improve overall health*. With an emphasis on prevention and access to early care, The Foundation supports numerous innovative approaches and practical solutions to improve oral – and overall – health. Improving oral health will save money for everyone, help seniors live healthier and enable children to do better in school, increasing their chances for success.

Oral Health Status:

- Dental decay is the single most common chronic disease of early childhood—five times more common than asthma.
- Washington's 2010 Smile Survey revealed that:
 - Nearly 40% of children start Kindergarten with tooth decay – which can impact a child's readiness to learn.
 - Disparities in children's oral health exist - low-income and minority children have much higher rates of decay than the statewide average.
- Nationally, nearly one in five older adults has untreated dental cavities.
- Those living in communities with water fluoridation experience up to 40% fewer cavities, yet in Washington only about 62% of the population benefits from community water fluoridation.

Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program

ABCD expands access to dental care for young children in Washington State by providing preventive and restorative dental services to Medicaid-enrolled children up to age 6. In 2000, almost two-thirds of young Medicaid-enrolled children didn't receive dental care. To change this, local dental societies, public health agencies, state Medicaid, the University of Washington School of Dentistry and the Foundation joined together to implement ABCD. These efforts are having an impact in 37 of Washington's 39 counties. Over the last ten years, the rate of Medicaid insured children under age 6 receiving dental care has nearly doubled, from 22% to 49%, and children are being seen earlier before disease starts. Washington's 2010 Smile Survey shows that we are making progress in improving oral health outcomes for children. The rate of untreated decay among low-income preschoolers was cut in half over the last 5 years, from 26% in 2005 to 13% in 2010.



Early Intervention in Medical Settings

The Foundation is working to change the standard of well-child care so that dental disease prevention services are delivered at an early age—in the doctor's office. Children are seen by their physician at least 8 times by their third birthday.

The Foundation works with medical practices and systems through in-office workshops to prepare medical providers to deliver oral health preventive services during well-child visits. More than one-third of the primary care physicians in the state have received the training. This innovation is significant because early prevention in a medical setting is a low-cost, effective way to protect children's oral health for a lifetime.



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Community Advocates for Oral Health

Washington Dental Service Foundation is a non-profit funded by Washington Dental Service – the leading dental benefits company in Washington State.

Making Oral Health Part of Early Learning

Children can't learn and succeed if they suffer from painful dental disease. To promote oral health in preschools and Head Start programs, the Foundation developed "Cavity Free Kids", a curriculum designed to include oral health as part of an ongoing preschool education. The curriculum includes activities to help staff, children and parents learn about oral health and what they can do to keep their teeth and mouth healthy. The curriculum is recognized nationally and has been disseminated in 22 other states, including New York, Texas, Wisconsin, Missouri and Hawaii. The Foundation has partnered with Thrive by Five Washington to bring Cavity Free Kids training to community-based early learning settings and home visiting and works with policymakers to ensure that protecting oral health is part of the early learning system statewide.



Reducing Oral Disease Among Seniors

Good oral health is an essential component of healthy aging. Oral disease puts seniors at higher risk for diabetic complications, heart disease, stroke and poor nutrition. The Foundation develops and supports initiatives that aim to improve seniors' oral health by using risk assessment and oral screenings to catch problems early and expanding access to oral health care. The Foundation works to ensure oral health preventive services are offered in a variety of settings that seniors access such as medical offices, pharmacies, and senior centers, and training caregivers to help seniors maintain a healthy mouth. The Foundation is sponsoring "Mind Your Mouth", a dry mouth awareness campaign aimed at seniors and healthcare professionals.



Fluoridating Drinking Water

Water fluoridation is the most important step a community can take to improve the oral health of all residents. The Foundation works to protect the ability of local communities to choose water fluoridation and provides assistance to groups who are committed to bringing the benefits of fluoride to their communities. Since 2001, an additional 285,000 Washington residents are receiving the health benefits of fluoridated water as a result of the Foundation's work.



Community Health Centers

Since 2000, the Foundation has supported expansions of community health center dental clinics, the safety-net clinics that provide dental care for many of the uninsured and low-income patients in Washington. The goal is to enable community health centers to provide more visits and focus on prevention. To date the Foundation's support contributed nearly 50,000 additional patient visits at community health centers in Washington each year. The Foundation and WDS invested in creating the new Center for Pediatric Dentistry, a partnership of Children's Hospital and the UW School of Dentistry



The SmileMobile

A 38-foot modern dental clinic on wheels has been serving children in need across Washington State since 1995. The SmileMobile was created to bring dental services — at little or no charge — directly to children who do not otherwise have access to care. Since it first hit the road, the mobile clinic has treated more than 30,000 children throughout the state.



Advocating for Effective Oral Health Policies

The Foundation works to create an environment where policy proposals to improve children's and seniors' oral health are understood and supported by policymakers and the public. Through a broad-based coalition and a range of campaign activities, the Foundation is drawing attention to the prevalence of oral disease, its consequences and the need for policy solutions. Funding for oral health programs in Washington State is less likely to shrink, and effective policies are more likely to be adopted, when there is a constituency advocating for oral health.

