



Proposed Oral Health Project
Presented to the Washington State Board of Health March 13, 2013
by the Health Promotion Committee

Goal: Creation of a Washington State Board of Health set of strategies to improve the oral health of Washington State residents.

Purpose:

- To promote strategies that improve the oral health of Washington residents; and
- To guide Washington State Board of Health (SBOH) rule and policy development activity.

Scope: To provide leadership on public health policies that focus on oral health promotion, prevention, early intervention and treatment.

Rationale: Oral diseases are costly, painful, debilitating, and widespread in Washington State. However, oral health problems are preventable. Oral health diseases affect more than just the mouth; they are also associated with systemic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, adverse pregnancy outcomes, and aspiration pneumonia.

Dental disease is the most common chronic disease of childhood. Untreated dental disease can cause intense pain that affects a child's ability to eat, get enough sleep, pay attention, and sit still in class. Nationally, more than 51 million school hours are lost each year to dental-related illness.

For adults, untreated dental disease can result in pain, poor nutrition, lack of employability, and social isolation, which can impact quality of life. Older adults are particularly at-risk due to taking multiple medications that cause dry mouth and lead to tooth decay.

Poor dental health is costly for Washington residents. According to a 2010 report by the Washington State Hospital Association, dental complaints were the number one reason uninsured adults visited Washington state emergency rooms, costing over \$36 million in an 18 month period. The CDC reports employed adults lose more than 164 million hours of work nationally due to dental health problems.

Strategies that prevent and treat dental disease improve oral health and save money. For example, providing dental treatment to people with diabetes reduces hospitalizations by 61% in the first year of treatment and reduces their medical costs on average \$3,200 per year.

Methods:

- Review nationally recognized strategic approaches to improving oral health
- Adapt best strategic approaches to Washington State
- Discuss strategies with state experts and key informants
- Hold a consultation session with an Expert Oral Health Advisory Group to make recommendations to the Board
- Present Expert Oral Health Advisory Group's recommendations on their preferred approach to improve the oral health of Washington State residents to the Board for potential endorsement