

Topic Areas of Action Plan Focus

Policy and Advocacy

The Policy and Advocacy topic area includes “Outcomes” directed at public or private policies that need to be established or advocated for in order to positively impact access to or delivery of oral health care services. This topic area has overarching impact on all five actions in the National Call to Action and the Healthy People 2010 objectives.

Priority Outcome #1

Advocate for changing the Dental Practice Act regarding licensing Registered Dental Hygienists and foreign-trained dentists.

Why

“Estimates predict a significant shortage (of dentists) by 2020 due to the number of retiring dentists out-pacing the number of dental graduates.

“In 1999, a dentist survey was conducted by the Colorado State Board of Dental Examiners and the University of Colorado School of Dentistry in conjunction with licensure renewals. The results indicate that the majority of dentists practice in metropolitan areas, primarily along the Front Range, which corresponds with high-density population centers.” -- Impact of Oral Disease on the Health of Coloradans.



The supply of dental hygienists in the state is predicted to outpace the supply of dentists. It is prudent to utilize this already exiting workforce of dental hygienists to its fullest potential.

Strategy 1: Form a cross-disciplinary task force to continue to examine other states’ models, current regulation, and potential changes to the dental hygiene scope of practice.

Suggested Partners

Area Health Education Centers, Primary Care Office, University of Colorado School of Dentistry, State Board of Dental Examiners

Suggested Action Steps

- Action: Research successful programs in the United Kingdom and Australia.
- Action: Seek a regulatory waiver, if necessary, to develop and to evaluate a pilot project on the expansion of services through identified means.

Evaluation

Task force is convened. Report on viable models is presented. Legislation is drafted. Waiver is developed. Project results are analyzed. Successful strategies are expanded.

Strategy 2: Evaluate recruitment and retention impact of the current foreign-trained dental program.

Suggested Partners

Area Health Education Centers, Primary Care Office, University of Colorado School of Dentistry, State Board of Dental Examiners, National Commission on Dental Examinations

Suggested Action Steps

- Action: Research successful programs in other states, including Maine and California.
- Action: Engage University of Colorado School of Dentistry in the evaluation of the current program.

continued

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Evaluation

Task force is convened. Report on viable models is presented. Legislation is drafted. Waiver is developed. Project results are analyzed. Successful strategies are expanded.

Priority Outcome #2

Improve reimbursement to oral health care providers, from private and public-funded sectors, for all services.

Why

Only three percent of Colorado Medicaid dental providers are classified as “significant providers,” and Colorado dentists continually cite poor reimbursement rates as a deterrent for providing services to unique populations. --Impact of Oral Disease on the Health of Coloradans.

Strategy 1: Examine best practices to identify methods to improve reimbursement for providing care to populations with unique dental needs.

Suggested Partners

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, oral health provider organizations, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Suggested Action Steps

- Action: Survey states that have improved reimbursement rates.
- Action: Replicate successful strategies to improve reimbursement rates.

Evaluation

Survey is conducted. Reimbursement is improved.

Strategy 2: Advocate for the inclusion of preventive benefits in all publicly provided dental coverage.

Suggested Partners

Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado

Department of Public Health and Environment, oral health provider organizations

Suggested Action Steps

- Action: Document cost savings of preventive care for oral health and medical health.
- Action: Use cost comparisons from other states’ Medicaid and SCHIP programs, to educate policymakers on the importance of preventive services for adults.

Evaluation

Prevention cost savings are documented and are promoted to policy makers. Preventive benefits are included in publicly funded dental coverage.

Priority Outcome #3

Coordinate dental insurance plans with health insurance plans.

Why

“Dental insurance is a major determinant of dental utilization. Dental care may be offered as part of a comprehensive medical and dental plan or as a separate plan.” U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Oral Health.

Strategy 1: Provide learning opportunities for health insurance plans to understand the oral health, general health connection.

Suggested Partners

Third-party payers, medical and oral health provider organizations, Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, Colorado Association of Health Plans

Suggested Action Steps

- Action: Establish learning forums.
- Action: Identify and promote existing and emerging science connecting oral and medical health to dental and medical provider organizations.

Evaluation

Learning forums established. Existing and emerging science promoted to health professions and organizations.