

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in collaboration with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) developed the stakeholder-driven "*California Oral Health Plan 2018-2028*" (*Plan*) to improve the oral health of Californians and achieve oral health equity across the state.

In 2015, in collaboration with the DHCS, CDPH convened an advisory committee to guide the development of the *Plan*. The advisory committee reviewed available studies and reports to identify the major oral health issues in California. The *Plan* provides a roadmap for addressing these issues in California. This document is a supplemental resource to the *Plan* and identifies key messages to share with partners and stakeholders for improving oral health and achieving oral health equity for all Californians:

- Oral health is an essential and integral component of overall health throughout life. Improving oral health improves overall health, wellbeing and quality of life of individuals and communities while reducing health care costs.
- Oral diseases are highly prevalent in all stages of life among California residents. These diseases are correlated with factors such as income, race and ethnicity, and education. National reports consistently rank California in the lower quartile among states with respect to children's oral health status and receipt of preventive dental services.
- The *Plan* is a roadmap for all Californians. The strategies identified in the *Plan* will strive to improve oral health across the lifespan for California's diverse population.
- The *Plan* offers the structure for collective action to assess and monitor oral health status and oral health disparities, prevent oral diseases, increase access to dental services, promote best practices and advance evidence-based policies.
- The *Plan* capitalizes on recent fiscal developments, expanded coverage options, as well as the significant improvements in the Medi-Cal Dental Program, and lays the critical groundwork for the state. Notably, the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016 provides \$30 million annually to activities that support the implementation of the *Plan*.
- Most oral diseases such as tooth decay, gum infections, and mouth cancers are preventable. Effective preventive measures are available, but both clinical dental services and community level interventions are underutilized.
- The *Plan* emphasizes the need for data to support development of oral health programs and policies. Assessment is a key objective of California's public health efforts to address the nature and extent of oral diseases and their risk factors by collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating oral health data.
- Programs such as community water fluoridation, school-based or linked programs that increase access to dental sealants and fluoride, and tobacco use prevention and control

as well as implementation of the State kindergarten oral health assessment requirement, have the potential to reduce the burden of oral diseases.

- Individual-level interventions to encourage healthful habits such as tooth brushing, drinking water containing fluoride, and regular dental visits are essential to maintaining good oral health.
- Individuals and communities can take steps to avoid tobacco, sugar sweetened beverages and excessive alcohol use to improve their overall health and oral health.
- Aligning dental care programs, payment systems, and integrating oral health into primary care will lead to increased dental visits and create opportunities to prevent dental diseases.
- Screening, counseling, referral and preventive services are recommended in community settings. It is important to establish linkages among people, providers, and community resources for facilitating cross referrals.
- Adequate infrastructure and capacity are necessary to deliver both essential public health services and dental care and to achieve the objectives of the *Plan*.
- Californians need to understand how to obtain, make decisions about and use oral health information and services to improve their overall health. All organizations can use their connections to local communities to increase the flow of credible and useful information on oral health that leads to increases in preventive oral health behaviors and use of appropriate oral health services.
- Training is needed to improve dental team members' communication skills with a culturally, linguistically diverse population. Information needs to be written in plain language and in languages that are representative of the diverse California population groups.
- Dental insurance coverage has been expanded in both Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program, and Covered California, California's health insurance exchange. Outreach activities to provide information about the expanded coverage will help many individuals and families utilize oral health care services.

