A message from the Delaware Oral Health Coalition

A Word of Thanks to Gregory B. McClure, Dental Director, Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH), Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services (BOHDS)

The Delaware Oral Health Coalition (DOHC) would like to express its sincere appreciation to Dr. Gregory B. McClure, who is retiring after serving 16 years as the Dental Director of the BOHDS.

The DOHC partners wish to recognize Dr. McClure for the significant contributions he has made to improve oral health for Delawareans, especially for the exceptional dental care he provided to children throughout the First State.

During his tenure with the Division of Public Health (DPH), Dr. McClure initiated a comprehensive oral health program to provide population-based dental services; established a surveillance system to collect oral health data; developed policies to improve oral health and dental services; developed and coordinated the implementation of the state’s oral health plan; launched the oral health coalition; and established community dental clinics to increase access to oral health care statewide.

As a recognized leader in dental health, Dr. McClure serves as president of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) and as a board member of the Delaware Institute for Dental Education and Research (DIDER). He is also a member of the American Dental Association and its Delaware component, the Delaware State Dental Society.

Dr. McClure is a dedicated public health professional and advocate who has devoted his career to improving oral health awareness, access, and outcomes for all, especially for those who are most vulnerable – including children, older adults, and persons with disabilities.

The Board would like to thank Dr. McClure for his years of service and for the leadership and support that he generously provided to the DOHC over the past years.

Though we will certainly miss you, Dr. McClure, we wish you all the best in your retirement.
Join the movement in reducing healthcare disparities

**HHS Office of Minority Health launches Cultural Competency Program for Oral Health Professionals**

Have you ever had a moment when you did not know how to best serve a patient with a different background than your own? Did you know that racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to have worse oral health outcomes? As the U.S. population becomes more and more diverse, you can be prepared.

The Office of Minority Health (OMH) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has launched a Cultural Competency Program for Oral Health Professionals.

This e-learning program gives you the basic cultural and linguistic competency knowledge and skills so that you can:

- Expand your patient base by providing more culturally and linguistically appropriate care to a wider diversity of patients.
- Deliver a higher quality of care to help your patients meet their oral health care goals, while honoring and respecting their cultural beliefs and practices.
- Decrease clinical errors that may arise due to cultural and linguistic differences in communication and differences in oral health literacy.
- Gain essential tools to help recognize and lessen the racial and ethnic health care disparities that persist in oral health.

The three courses target dental assistants, dental hygienists, dentists, dental specialists, and any other professional who has the unique opportunity to help improve access to care, quality of care, and oral health outcomes of all patients.

Visit the program to learn more and to register: [https://oralhealth.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/](https://oralhealth.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/)

*This article was adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Minority Health website.*

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**Health Equity Resources**

**Video – Joining the Fight for Oral Health: Promoting Health Equity:** The video makes a clarion call for engagement through outreach and volunteerism to advance equitable health care with oral health as the exemplar. The video was produced as part of the PA (Physician Assistant) Leadership Initiative in Oral Health with support from the National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health (NIIOH) and funding from the DentaQuest Foundation and Washington Dental Service Foundation. Stream the video at [http://www.nccpa.net/oral-health](http://www.nccpa.net/oral-health).

**Taking a Bite Out of Oral Health Inequities:** This brief identifies the persistent oral health disparities impacting low-income, communities of color in California and pathways to improve oral health equity.

**Mapping Medicare Disparities (MMD) Tool:** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released an interactive [Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool](http://www.nccpa.net/oral-health), which identifies disparities in health outcomes, utilization, and spending by race, ethnicity, and geographic location. Understanding geographic differences in disparities is important to informing policy decisions and efficiently targeting populations and geographies for interventions.

**A Framework for Educating Health Professionals to Address the Social Determinants of Health:** The World Health Organization defines the social determinants of health (SDOH) as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.” These forces and systems include economic policies; development agendas; cultural and social norms; social policies; and political systems. Educating health professionals in communities negatively affected by the social determinants of health can generate awareness among those professionals about the potential root causes of ill health, contributing to more effective strategies for improving health and health care for underserved individuals, communities, and populations. This is the context in which the expert committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine developed a high level framework for educating health professionals to address the SDOH.

Little Teeth, Big Purpose

While baby teeth are only temporary tenants in the mouths of children, the benefits of taking good care of them can be life-long. Primary teeth begin emerging from the gums around 6 months of age. Most kids will have a full set of 20 baby teeth by the time they are 3 years old.

Many people mistakenly think that because these teeth will eventually be replaced with adult teeth, they are not as important. In actuality, baby teeth have many essential roles in overall oral health.

**Eating/Nutrition:** Children with painful cavities or missing/misshapen teeth will have a hard time eating and chewing. This can lead to dietary deficiencies and even malnourishment. Having a healthy set of baby teeth enables healthy eating habits during crucial periods of childhood development and promotes healthy eating as a lifestyle that transitions into adulthood.

**Speech Development:** Learning to speak clearly depends a lot upon the condition of the first set of teeth. Proper pronunciation and tongue placement is necessary for making certain sounds. Speech development is important for cognitive, social, and emotional development in children of all ages.

**Self-esteem/Academics:** Having bad breath from dental decay, infection, or gum disease, in addition to the appearance of rotten or yellow teeth, can be traumatic for young children trying to build self-confidence in their everyday interactions. This can lead to poor performance in school, as anxiety from insecurities and teasing can be a major distraction and so can toothaches.

**Place Holders:** It is important that the baby teeth remain in a child’s mouth until the adult tooth underneath of it is ready to erupt through the gums. If a baby tooth is lost prematurely, a gap will be left and the remaining baby teeth will shift towards one another to close it. This leaves no room for the adult tooth to come up when it is ready. This can result in impacted or overly crowded adult teeth. Healthy baby teeth save room for emerging adult teeth which allows for a straighter, healthier smile in adulthood.

Good oral health in children should be a team effort — patient, parent, and dental provider. The best time for children to develop good hygiene habits is when they are young. Teach them to brush morning and night with fluoride toothpaste for two minutes each and floss daily. Teach them also to choose healthier snacks and beverages as opposed to sugary alternatives. Take them to see a dentist on or around their first birthday. The dentist can provide tips on how to keep little smiles healthy. For more information, visit: www.aapd.org, or on social media, search #2min2x.

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Teaching young children to brush for two minutes, two times per day with fluoride toothpaste will help them develop good oral hygiene habits.
Oral Health Literacy:
What Parents Don’t Know Can Hurt Their Kids

Oral health literacy has been defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic oral health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions and act on them.\(^1\)

Health literacy is important because a lack of it can be a barrier to obtaining care. Parents who don’t have basic knowledge about oral hygiene may not seek care that can protect and maintain their children’s oral health. For low income families, this can mean not getting preventive dental care during the critical time between when the first teeth erupt (about six months of age) and when children come to the attention of daycare providers and teachers outside the home. Early intervention is critical in preventing the development of tooth decay, which can compromise a child’s overall health and development.

Primary (or baby) teeth are important for good nutrition, learning to speak clearly, and for self-esteem. They also act as important space-holders for the permanent teeth developing underneath them. Severe tooth decay can put a child at risk for requiring surgery under general anesthesia to remove infected teeth to prevent further damage. This outcome is avoidable if parents:

- Brush the child’s teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- Avoid sending the child to bed with a bottle containing liquid other than water.
- Maintain routine scheduled visits to the dentist beginning no later than age 1.

Children younger than 21 who are insured under CHIP/Medicaid receive free dental care in Delaware.

\(^1\) National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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You’re Invited!

Bridging and Bonding Partnerships
Delaware Oral Health Coalition
2016 Annual Membership Meeting

October 7, 2016
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Dover Downs Conference Center
RSVP: Call 302-744-4554 or
Email dhss_dph_dental@state.de.us