



By Bev Isman, RDH, MPH, ELS

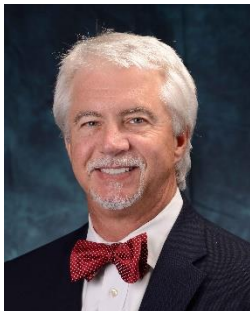
Welcome to 2022!!! We never thought that 2021 would end, we hoped the pandemic would end, but here we are still masking, vaxing, distancing, and ZOOMing. Oh, and now we REALLY have to worry about the world in addition to US politics. I encourage everyone to read the 2021 Annual Report when it is posted in March; it highlights *A Year of Realistic Optimism* and how the ASTDD family coped with a complex, confusing, and often frustrating environment.

### State Dental Director Calls, National Partnerships, and Congratulations

ASTDD continues to participate in calls and emails with the COVID-19 Public-Private Partner Dental Coordination Group, more than three dozen organizations and a dozen federal entities dedicated to improving the oral health of the nation. We work through coordinated messaging, sharing knowledge about the ongoing pandemic as it relates to oral health, promoting integration of oral health into overall health, and working collectively on oral health topics. ASTDD also participates in the CareQuest Institute's Pandemic Response Workgroup. The Oral Health Pandemic Response Workgroup, which includes ASTDD, sent a letter to Adm. Rachel L. Levine, MD, Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Health, asking that oral health be included in the revision of the DHHS Strategic Plan and other policy, legislative, regulatory, and administrative activities as integral to overall health. Many ASTDD members serve on the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) Response Teams and participate in OPEN webinars, updates, and other training.

Dental directors continue to meet virtually to provide information and support to each other. Calls in January and February included:

- January 20: BJ Tatro, a former ASTDD Evaluation consultant, led the dental directors in a preliminary discussion about the ASTDD 2019-2021 Strategic Map to determine areas where we may need updates. She will lead a session at the Board of Directors meeting in April to continue the discussion and finalize a new strategic map for 2022-24.
- February 24. Sydnee Chavis, DMD, Clinical Professor, Special Care and Geriatrics, Dept of Dental Surgery at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, provided an overview of the [National Dental Practice Based Research Network \(PBRN\)](#), including some of its accomplishments and asked the directors for input on how to market the Network to more people. In addition, Katya Mauritsen, DMD, MPH(c), who retired as the Colorado dental director in December, is now working as a Special Advisor to the director of the CDC Division of Oral Health (DOH). She shared her enthusiasm for the new position and will continue to work with the other DOH staff in providing support to states. Congratulations Katya!



Also, congratulations to Lindy Bollen, dental director in Arkansas, who retired at the end of January. Lindy served on the ASTDD BOD as a director and kept us entertained with his quick wit and stories. We will miss you and your stylish bow ties Lindy! Looks like you've been wearing them forever!

And more kudos...Adam Barefoot, dental director for Georgia, was selected to be the “public member” for the Review Committee for the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The group works to ensure that all ACGME-accredited Preventive Medicine training programs maintain a high-quality learning environment that produce exceptional Preventive Medicine-trained physicians. He hopes to highlight the importance of oral health to preventive medicine.



## National Oral Health Conference (NOHC) Update

Reminder to join us for the virtual annual ASTDD business meeting on March 23 from 1-2:30 EST; check the calendar on the ASTDD Website in Members Only for ZOOM details. Registration is well underway with more than 400 people already committed for the in-person 2022 NOHC at the Omni Fort Worth hotel April 11-13. More information about the meeting, transportation, hotel and registration are available [here](#). Kudos to the many ASTDD members who are giving presentations!

Don't forget to register for ASTDD-sponsored weekend workshops. Some are listed under the respective Committee activities in this report. Here are the other two.

**Enhancing State/Territorial Oral Health Programs Using the Updated ASTDD Guidelines and Competencies on Sunday April 10, 8:30-11.** This workshop is limited to directors and staff of State and Territorial Oral Health Programs. During this workshop, the facilitators will provide an overview of *ASTDD Guidelines for State and Territorial Oral Health Program* and *ASTDD Competencies for State Oral Health Programs*, discuss the changes and rationales behind the updates, show how they have been used by S/TOHP and in the peer support program, and demonstrate how to use the associated tools. Attendees will be asked to relate any previous experiences with the documents, interact with the facilitators and other attendees to use the tools and create action plans to use them in the future.

**Exploring Strategies to Inform State Oral Health Workforce Policy and Programming on Sunday April 10, 8:00-12:00.** This session will describe state level strategies for applied oral health workforce evaluation. Topics include: foundational aspects of health workforce data collection, such as establishment of interagency partnerships between regulatory entities and dental public health/public health units; development of consensus minimum dataset survey tools; skills and tools required to develop data management processes that ensure quality and instill confidence of state workforce data; examples of applied state-based oral health workforce analyses and reporting mechanisms; benefits and challenges of specific strategies from the perspective of attendees' respective states/jurisdictions.

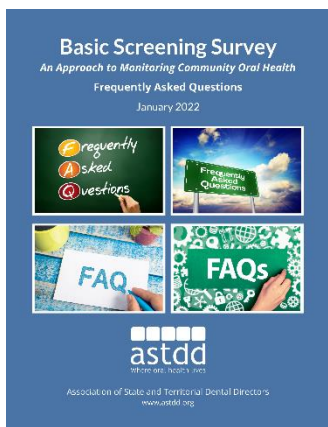
In addition, don't forget to welcome our dental colleagues from the US Affiliated Pacific Islands who are presenting a panel, **USAPI Oral Health Program Needs Assessment and Two Case Studies from the COVID Pandemic** on Monday at 3:00. ASTDD conducted the Needs Assessment in collaboration with the USAPI, and we continue to share resources and provide TA.

## ASTDD Peer and Member Support Program

Guy Deyton (MO) and Jonise McDaniel (PA) are still participating in the mentoring program. Lori oriented new directors Vonda Nutt from AR and Ashleigh Kirk from CO. Two long-time mentors, Bob Russell and Katya Mauritsen, left their positions. Frances Wise (AK) and Katie Glueckert (MT) have been added to the list of mentors. Kimberlie Payne oriented

41 new associate members to ASTDD during January and February. Everyone is looking forward to seeing all these new faces in person at the NOHC! The Peer Support Discussion Group held a call on January 28 focusing on workforce challenges impacting S/TOHP and school-based programs. States participating agreed a workforce assessment is needed to get a clearer understanding of how many licensed dentists, dental hygienists and dental therapists are actually practicing. It is more challenging to get data on dental assistants. Another issue is keeping providers in-state once they have completed their education. Participants also discussed school-based sealant programs (SBSP) and the impact of COVID-19. Topics included pay (hourly vs. salary), glass ionomer retention rates, and staff retention rates. Some programs are still finding school districts are not allowing outside entities to be on campus. The group also shared ways they have used the ASTDD Competencies and suggestions for specific areas that should be addressed during the NOHC workshop on that topic.

### Data Committee and National Oral Health Data Portal



Kathy Phipps and Mike Manz provided TA to 14 states for Basic Screening Surveys (BSS) or other surveillance assistance. Classrooms are re-opening and BSS plans are moving forward. Check out the updated *Children’s BSS Manual* and the new *BSS Frequently Asked Questions* in the Children’s BSS Toolkit zip file. They are available at no cost to ASTDD members in the Members Only section of the ASTDD website. States are in the process of completing the 2022 Synopses questionnaires distributed in early January; a webinar describing the Synopses questions and process was held on January 25. Mike Manz continues to update ASTDD documents relating to emergency department non-traumatic dental conditions data coding and provided the ASTDD response to a request for comments for the 2022 annual review of Dental Quality Alliance (DQA) oral health quality measures, especially the Periodontal Measures.

We hope you were able to attend the launch of the National Oral Health Data Portal on January 10. John O’Malley demonstrated how the portal works and walked participants through the portal’s three layers:

1. Dataset Explorer helps users find and interpret the oral health information they need from different public oral health datasets, filterable by topic, geography, and population.
2. National Oral Health Surveillance System Dashboard consolidates 32 of the child and adult indicators to examine state performance across many measures in one view.
3. Public Github Repository hosts raw data files, detailed descriptions of the datasets and the processes to incorporate them into the National Oral Health Data Portal, and code used to generate analyses.

As a reminder, the more than 30 state and national datasets are public, and no data are interpreted. A [partial recording](#) is available (technical difficulties occurred so only listen until minute 33.) This will be an invaluable resource for accessing state and national datasets through one portal. Access [the Portal](#) through the ASTDD homepage. The Portal was also featured during an OPEN Network presentation on January 25 with a discussion on how the portal links to their Blueprint Levers and what equity factors were considered in its development.

### Communications Committee

A Communications Committee call was held January 12, with discussion topics including preparing for the NOHC and future Spotlight and Communications Community of Practice (CCoP) topics. The next Spotlight will be scheduled in May and the next CCoP in June. *If you are not signed up for the CCoP and would like to join, contact Kimberlie Payne at [kpayne@astdd.org](mailto:kpayne@astdd.org).* The Communications Committee is coordinating the ASTDD exhibit booth this year. Kimberlie is working with consultants to update ASTDD topic-related lists of ASTDD resources. Stop by and see what is new and meet



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some of our members. The Social Media Workgroup met on January 24 to discuss social media plans for the NOHC and to continue updating the social media library; an updated library of messages should be posted in March.

The 2021 ASTDD Annual Report will be posted online in March in time for the Business meeting; we are not printing copies this year. Check out the special fun section on ASTDD members' pet companions and home office assistants.

The committee is sponsoring the NOHC weekend workshop, **Getting the Media to Listen and Cover Your Story on Saturday April 9, 2-5pm**. This session will help attendees recognize what is newsworthy and why, offer tips on choosing media targets, and outline the elements needed to write a successful media pitch. Presenters will walk through the steps needed to prepare for media outreach and then act as reporters for participants to pitch their oral health story ideas using the tools that have just learned.

### **Dental Public Health Policy Committee (DPHPC) and Best Practices Committee (BPC)**

During their monthly meetings the DPHPC continued to review and annotate a list of ASTDD documents older than five years and is checking with several potential resource people about updates. Don't forget to register for their NOHC Weekend Workshop, **Big "P" Policy, Little "p" policy and Putting it Into Practice on Sunday April 10, 8:30-11:30**. This session will use selected current policy issues, ASTDD documents and other resources to demonstrate how policy statements can be used in planning, developing policy initiatives, drafting state oral health plans, and preparing testimony to and for decision-makers while staying within the limits that public entities must observe. CDC guidance and other resources will be included, and participants will practice in scenarios using policy statements.

BPC authors and workgroups continue to make progress on updating Best Practice Approach Reports on *State Oral Health Improvement Plans* and *School-Based Sealant Programs*. The Committee also is planning the NOHC concurrent session, *Oral Health Care of People with Special Health Care Needs: Data Drives Decisions* on April 11 at 1:00.

### **School and Adolescent Oral Health Committee (SAOHC) and Dental Sealant Subject Matter Expert**



Lori Cofano and Rudy Blea presented to the CMS Oral Health Technical Advisory Group (OTAG) on February 3 on the impact of COVID-19 on school-based dental sealant programs. Several states have shared resources with the committee on numerous topics. Rhode Island's *Dental Trauma Decision Tree* that was shared with Liz Clark at the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) was in their weekly digest several times for Children's Dental Health Month. Lori Participated on a CDC

coordination team call for the Community Preventive Services Task Force review of school fluoride varnish programs. Susan Griffin and her team have finalized the search strategy and are currently ordering articles. The SAOHC is still in the process of updating school-related ASTDD policy statements. Sandy Tesch, ASTDD dental sealant coordinator, has fielded several questions from states to forward to CDC about their SEALS reporting system. She regularly monitors CDC- funded states dental sealant group listserv and posts information on upcoming sealant-related events. She facilitated the sealant group CoP call on February 11 where the discussion topic was school-based sealant program sustainability activities. She also shared the latest update to the CDC's Infection Prevention and Control guidance for healthcare personnel. Dental healthcare personnel should regularly consult with state dental boards or health departments for current recommendations and requirements, which will probably change based on level of community transmission where their practices are based.

### **ASTDD Fluorides Committee (FC)**

The FC sponsored a webcast, *Raising Oral Health Knowledge Online*, presented by Matt Jacob on January 26 and attended by about 115 people. Matt, a communications consultant who works closely with public health organizations,

is a member of the ASTDD Communications Committee. Matt began by noting that the pandemic has raised the profile of state health department websites as a source for helpful information; however, although this presents an opportunity for state oral health programs, a [recent study](#) shows that many states can improve visitors' experience by making web content easier to find and easier to understand. Matt was one of the study's authors and has co-authored several journal articles related to oral health communications and policy. In this presentation, he identified the challenges and offered strategies for oral health leaders to enhance the reach and impact of their web content. The study and the presentation focus on community water fluoridation but the issues raised about web content are more broadly applicable to other oral health topics. The recording and slides from the webcast have been posted on the ASTDD homepage, the Fluorides Committee and Communications Committee pages and on the archived webcasts and audioconferences page.

The CWF Community of Practice hosted a webinar on February 22<sup>nd</sup> focusing on training and related issues for state fluoridation coordinators, opening the session up to other states and ASTDD members. After a review of potentially useful websites (CDC, AAP's Campaign for Dental Health, ADA), state fluoridation coordinators from Michigan, Louisiana, Georgia, Missouri and North Dakota related their experiences. Discussion covered working with public water system operators, relationships with state and state rural water associations, collaborating with drinking water and other state level programs, using CDC FLO, and more. The notion that in its broadest sense "training" is inclusive of communication, public information and education, as well as technical aspects of water fluoridation was a common theme.

Plan to attend the ASTDD Awards ceremony on April 10 from 2:30-4 to celebrate the recipients of the ASTDD/ADA/CDC Community Water Fluoridation Awards. Also note that CDC is doing a Community Water Fluoridation Program Update at the NOHC on Monday at 5:30.

### Healthy Aging Committee (HAC)

The HAC held a committee meeting on February 10. During part of the call, Trish D'Antonio from the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) presented on their *Oral Health and Aging: National Policy Initiatives*. GSA is actively advancing oral health as an essential element of healthy aging. Trish discussed current work of several coalitions to advance legislative and regulatory initiatives to improve Medicare coverage for oral health services and the efforts to recognize links between oral health and nutrition across the lifespan in the USDA Dietary Guidelines. The Workgroup is still developing materials and graphics for the Older Adult Oral Health Toolkit. The Committee is still trying to seek funding to update the Older Adult BPAR and the related policy statement. John O'Malley is also talking with groups to be able to add more older adult oral health data in the National Oral Health Data Portal.

### National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety (NCHBHS)

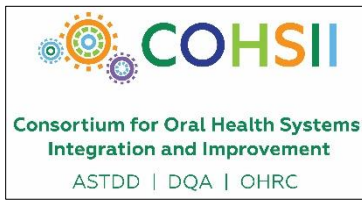
Gina Sharps and Kathy Hunt conducted a Regional Dental Hygienist Liaison Coordinator (RDHLC) Quarterly call on February 22 and finalized a new guidance tool to clarify their activities as well as other communication tools for the Dental Hygienist Liaisons (DHLs). They also participated in a Regional Health Specialist call on February 14. On February 28 Amittia Parker from Georgetown's Center for child and Human Development presented a webinar on *Social Determinants of Health* for about 33 DHLs and NCHBHS oral health team members.



The Office of Head Start (OHS) was asked to identify strategies for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Oral Health Strategic Framework 2022–2027. We were honored that Marco Beltran from the OHS asked the NCHBHS Oral Health Team to review the five proposed overarching goals and brainstorm ideas for strategies involving Head Start,

including some involving DHLs. After phone calls and emails, the team submitted several draft strategies and activities. We will report on the final Strategic Framework when it is released.

## Center for Oral Health Systems Integration and Improvement (COHSII)



ASTDD consultants continued to participate in monthly Learning Event webinars, calls, an Environmental Scan Workgroup meeting, and TA activities, including coordination of TA for US Affiliated Pacific Island MCH related projects. Preparations are underway for the Networks for Oral Integration (NOHI) virtual annual meeting in March.

The National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center hosts the Oral Health Learning Café. The café is an informal forum for professionals to engage with others via monthly webinars and a discussion list to learn about oral health programs and services throughout the country and to share strategies, challenges, lessons learned, and resources. Launched in September 2021, the café continues the work of the Oral Health Integration in Medical Settings Knowledge Network that was established in March 2018 and administered by the Arcora Foundation and the American Academy of Pediatrics, Section on Oral Health.

On February 8, 2022, the Oral Health Learning Café webinar featured a presentation by Michael Cabana, US Preventive Services Task Force, about the task force recommendation, Prevention of Dental Caries in Children Younger Than 5 Years—Screening and Interventions. During the webinar on March 10, 2022, Matt Allen, CEO and co-founder of Different Kind, will present information about shared decision-making in oral health. Individuals are welcome to subscribe to the [Oral Health Learning Café](#) to receive announcements about upcoming webinars and participate in the discussion list. For more information, contact Katy Battani at [keb302@georgetown.edu](mailto:keb302@georgetown.edu) or Susan Lorenzo at [susan.lorenzo@georgetown.edu](mailto:susan.lorenzo@georgetown.edu).

## Evaluation Activities

The Emory Evaluation team and Mary Davis continue to provide general assistance and TA to CDC-funded evaluators through their listserv and emails and review of states' evaluation reports and progress updates. Listserv posts included Evaluating Oral Health Surveillance Systems; Upcoming training events for 2022; and Coping with evaluation anxiety. The ASTDD evaluation team met online with CDC staff evaluators to discuss future coordination of evaluation training and TA to states. The consultants also assisted ASTDD committees on specific projects such as design of queries to pilot a community water fluoridation survey of WFRS and a pre-workshop assessment for the Guidelines and Competencies workshop of participants experiences and expectations.



The evaluators led a state peer discussion on ZOOM on February 7 for surveillance and evaluation specialists at state oral health programs funded through CDC's DP18-1810 cooperative agreement. The small-group discussions allowed participants to network, discuss surveillance and evaluation topics of interest, and learn how peers in other states are evaluating their programs and policies. As a follow up, the evaluation team compiled some resources and shared via the listserv. Future peer sessions will feature state evaluators sharing examples of their work.

There is still time to register for the NOHC workshop, *Evaluation Plans in Action: Tackling Real-World Road Blocks* on Saturday, April 9 from 3:30-5. What happens when you run into the real-world road blocks when trying to roll out your

evaluation plan? How can you pivot, salvage, rescue your best-laid evaluation plans when things go wrong? During this session, presenters will discuss the steps to implement an evaluation plan in a way that provides a clear path to success using [CDC's Framework for Program Evaluation](#). The presenters will explore, through case studies or examples, common situations that cause evaluation plans to stall or fail. In addition, this session will provide peer-to-peer opportunities to discuss barriers and roadblocks to evaluation plan implementation, and to brainstorm solutions to these hurdles.

### Meetings and Webinars

(links aren't available if they were a member only or pre-registration event)



#### **National Association of Chronic Disease Directors virtual webinars; January 20, 2022, Barbara Park reporting**

For the past five years, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) has hosted a Program Success Showcase featuring more than 60 projects and programs that demonstrate innovations in chronic disease prevention and control and health promotion impacting nearly every U.S. state and territory. This year's Showcase included panel discussions with public health luminaries and thought leaders on emerging issues in the field. One breakout session on Co-Morbid Conditions included diabetes, oral health, vision, and eye care. A total of about 200 people attended the 3 time slots for this session. If you want to access any of the presentation recordings or handouts, use this link [6th Annual Virtual Program Showcase - National Association of Chronic Disease Directors](#). This is the link to the [Resources Handout \(pdf\)](#) for the Co-Morbid conditions session.

#### **American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH) Annual Symposia (Virtual), February 15 and 16, 2022. Grace Lynn reporting.**

##### Colloquium Reveals Urgent Need to Improve Oral Health Care for Veterans

"Transforming Veteran Oral Health" was recently held by the American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH) in partnership with CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. More than 100 industry stakeholders heard from nationally renowned speakers — health care providers, advocates, policymakers, educators, and veterans— on ways to transform the oral health care system for veterans. The event was part of AIDPH's broader Veteran Oral Health Initiative to explore solutions supporting access, research, and advocacy in veteran oral health care. The colloquium followed strategic recommendations outlined in [Veteran Oral Health: Expanding Access and Equity](#) — a white paper developed in collaboration with CareQuest Institute.

"We began our veteran oral health initiative near the beginning of 2021 to understand the unique needs of veterans and amplify their voices in designing systems of care," said Annaliese Cothron, AIDPH executive director. "This colloquium was a culmination of key stakeholders sharing research, innovating oral health care delivery, and uplifting veteran voices in the decision-making process."

To learn more, visit [aidph.org](#) and follow them on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). Watch recorded sessions from the Colloquium on AIDPH's [YouTube channel](#).

**Medicaid/Medicare/CHIP Services Dental Association (MSDA), Advancing Oral Health Equity through Inclusion, Access, Accountability and Artificial Intelligence, 2021-22 Symposium and Annual Business Meeting (virtual). January 11 and 12, 2022.**

Presentations included the following:

- *Keynote Address: Focusing on Equity in Oral Healthcare—Why Now and How* by Natalia Chalmers, CMS Chief Dental Officer
- *Give Voice to Adult Medicaid Beneficiaries*, produced by students from the Spanish Filmmaking class at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA who partner with community groups each year (MSDA this year) to develop a video promoting social justice.
- Renée Joskow, Senior Advisor to the NIDCR Director, presented *Barriers and Challenges to Achieving Equitable Oral Health from the Policy and Program Perspectives*, with highlights from the recently released NIDCR *Oral Health in America* report.
- *Identifying Solutions: Inclusion and Access*; a panel lays out potential strategies for solving issues related to inclusion and access, including dental directors Sam Zwetchkenbaum (RI) and Sarah Finne (NH).
- *Ensuring Network Adequacy*: a panel discussion
- *Adapting to Change as a Result of COVID: What We've Learned: What's Next* presented by Timothy Ricks, Assistant Surgeon General, USDHHS
- *Assessing Quality and Equity in Medicaid Programs and Oral Healthcare*: government officials discussed how to move in this direction when administrating and evaluating Medicaid dental programs across the states
- *Gaining Input through Member Self-Assessment*; attendees learned from panelists of a new *Oral Health Equity Self-Assessment tool* for use by both Medicaid beneficiaries and program administrators.
- *Employing Digital Technology and Artificial Intelligence to Promote Oral Health Equity*, panelists focused on innovative ways in which AI is contributing to Medicaid dental program management of health information; improved diagnostics, decision support, predictive analytics, standardized and objective patient information, operational efficiencies, digital workflows, claim submission accuracies, provider performance; and program integrity.
- *Clinical Perspective and Evidence Update*, where Peter Milgrom from the University of WA discussed the emergence of Povidone-Iodine added to Fluoride Varnish for use in preventive dentistry.
- *DC Federal and Legislative Update* on Federal legislation and regulation effecting Medicaid dental programs, contract vendors, providers, and beneficiaries.

Information from the business meeting, including the annual report, and all presentations are available as pdf files on the [MSDA website](#).

**Look for the next issue of *Roundup* in May 2022 that will include summaries of the ASTDD online Business Meeting and the in-person Awards Ceremony and the NOHC. Send any questions, comments or articles to Bev Isman at [bev.isman@comcast.net](mailto:bev.isman@comcast.net)**