



Oral Health Coalitions & Community Advocates: A Key Element of State Oral Health Infrastructure

State oral health programs rely heavily on oral health coalitions and community advocates to create and implement state plans, promote evidence-based prevention and public health approaches and advocate for new policies and laws. State oral health infrastructure (organizational structure and support) is required to create and sustain prevention programs (e.g., dental sealants, community water fluoridation) and enable access to comprehensive and coordinated oral health services in communities--both lead to improved oral health and overall health for people of all ages. **High levels of investment, expertise, political will and strong internal and external support are needed NOW to prevent erosion of public oral health programs by political, economic and other forces.**

*A new report, **State Oral Health Infrastructure and Capacity: Reflecting on Progress and Charting the Future**, by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors,¹ reviews efforts and progress in state oral health infrastructure and capacity building since 2000 and provides lessons learned and recommendations to enhance state and local program ability to fulfill critical roles.*

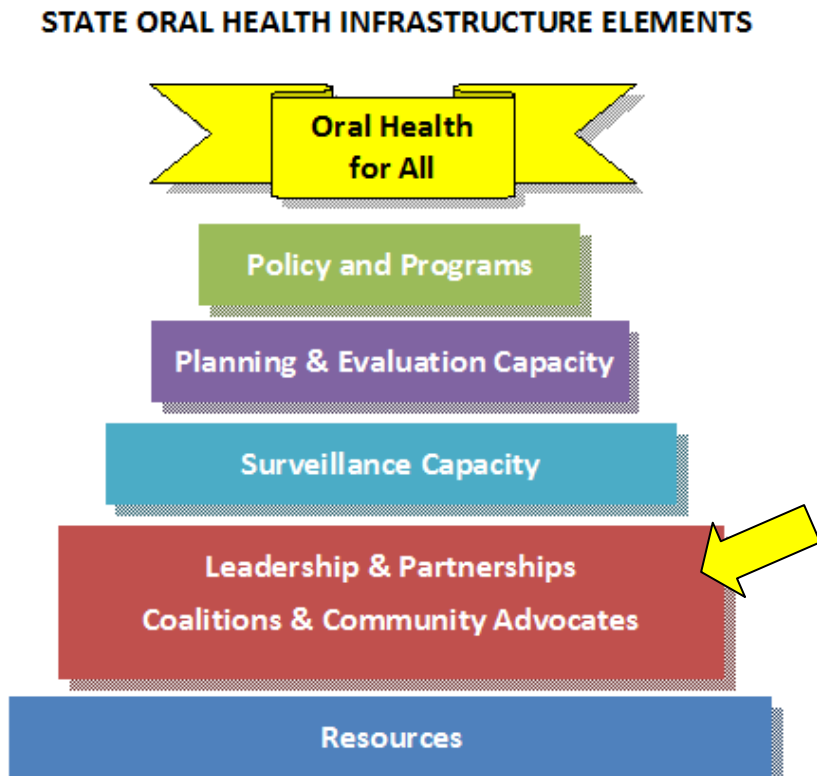
Ten Key Recommendations from the Report for Coalition Members and Community Advocates

1. Help identify and procure diversified funding for state and local oral health programs and help leverage existing resources to support oral health programs and initiatives
2. Participate in developing a common vision and goals for oral health statewide and in local communities
3. Promote and support leadership and professional development opportunities to enhance skills to address oral health needs
4. Learn more about the ASTDD Competencies and Guidelines and support State leadership and programs consistent with them
5. Increase emphasis on dental public health issues in health professions education
6. Support high quality oral health data collection and tracking and use data to guide decision making and evaluation of programs
7. Collaborate to integrate oral health data with other health data
8. Engage in ongoing and strategic collaborative planning to address the oral health of the population throughout the lifespan and to promote health equity
9. Support public policies that promote oral health
10. Increase public awareness of oral health issues and evidence-based prevention methods among policymakers and the public

What can you as an Oral Health Coalition Member or Community Advocate do right now to support state oral health infrastructure and capacity building?

- **Review the findings, lessons learned and recommendations from the Infrastructure and Capacity Building Report**
- **Share the information about infrastructure key elements with others--carry the messages for action to your stakeholders.**
- **Develop action plans for implementing the most relevant recommendations for your state.**

Coalition members/ other advocates provide a voice for/ and a link to the community in the work of the state oral health program, thus building capacity to collaboratively address oral health challenges.



¹ The full report is available on the ASTDD website at http://www.astdd.org/docs/Infrastructure_Enhancement_Project_Feb_2012.pdf