



### Organizational, Committee, and Consultant Subject Matter Experts (SME) Activities

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an informal brief summary of ASTDD activities to keep our members and partners aware of what we do on your behalf and to highlight resources. We also like to share more personal stories as ASTDD really is a family.

### ASTDD State Dental Directors, Board of Directors (BOD), Other National Activities

#### In Memorium

Dr. Merlyn "M. Dean" Perkins, 85, died on September 27, 2024 in Denton Texas. Dean attended dental school at UMKC in Kansas, MO where he met his wife Raynelle Ellison. They were married in Morrilton AK on December 29, 1974. He graduated from dental school in May 1976 and moved to Kimberling City, MO where he practiced general dentistry for 10 years. He then received a master's degree in Dental Public Health from the University of North Carolina and then became Chief of the Bureau of Dental Health in the Missouri Department of Health. Our current business manager, Cheryl Thomas was his secretary there. He retired in 2003. While in Missouri, Dean served in all ASTDD leadership positions on the ASTDD BOD, and as the ASTDD Executive Director from 2000-2009. Dean retired in January 2023 as ASTDD's Webmaster and Executive Director Emeritus and received the Greg McClure Memorial President's Award that year (pictured). ASTDD renamed the Distinguished Service Award the M. Dean Perkins Distinguished Service Award starting in 2024. Chris Wood, current ASTDD executive director, Cheryl Thomas, current ASTDD business manager, and Lynn Mouden, previous ASTDD president who also served with Dean in Missouri, attended the memorial service on October 25, 2024, and is pictured here with Dean's wife Raynelle.



#### CDC Cooperative Agreement

For the last two months we have been in the throes of starting the first year of our Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Division of Oral Health's (DOH) 0049 three-year funding opportunity, *Partner Promotion of Strategies to Advance Oral Health, Components 1 and 3*. Thirty-five entities applied for the 0048 cooperative agreement, *State Promotion of Strategies to Advance Oral Health*; 15 states were funded (IA, KS, LA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NV, NY, ND, OH, PA, SC, VA, WI.) The Association for Dental Safety (ADS) was funded for Component 2 of 0049. Congratulations to ADS, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them. We have submitted our response to the CDC technical review of our application but have not yet received a response. We have uploaded revised workplans for both components and attended multiple CDC calls for both national partners and funded states. We are busily writing our six-year final report for the 1811 national partner funding that is due November 30; maximum length is 100 pages so you know how I'm spending much of my time!

In the first two months of our new CDC funding, we have negotiated SME contracts and established MOUs with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) for Barb Park's expertise around medical-dental integration and adult Type 2 diabetes, and with Emory Centers for Public Health Training and Technical Assistance for evaluation consultation, primarily with Kristin Giordana and Maggie Pustinger. On October 15 we hosted and recorded a webinar for newly funded states to introduce ASTDD as an organization by highlighting our mission, members, governance and administration, funding sources, and roles in both CDC components including our SMEs, activities, communication pathways, national partners, and resources. In October we also conducted an environmental scan of funded states to determine primary contacts, types of peer learning preferred, best times to meet, and other types of assistance from ASTDD with partners and documents, etc. that states might want. Most states responded with their tentative plans and others were in the process of discussing changes with CDC. The scans were shared with ASTDD consultants to assist with planning and talks with states.

On October 28-30, Chris Wood, Judy Feinstein, Sandy Tesch, Kathy Phipps, and Maggie Pustinger attended a grantee kick-off meeting in Atlanta hosted by CDC DOH. Day 1 began with an *Opening Keynote Fireside Chat* featuring Dr. Gina Thornton Evans, Director, Division of Oral Health and Rear Admiral Michael Johnson, Chief Dental Officer, United States Public Health Service. It was followed by *Lessons From the Past to Use in the Future* featuring Dr. Gina Thornton Evans; Dr. Katya Mauritson, Lead, Program Services Team; and Nicole Johnson, Associate Director for Policy, Partnerships, and Strategic Communication. For the remainder of the time, *Working Sessions* with national partners and states were held on Community Water Fluoridation, Infection Prevention and Control, Evidence Based Preventive Dental Services (EBPDS), Data Analysis to Support Medical-Dental Integration (MDI) & EBPDS, Evaluation Plan Development, Focusing Your Evaluation Questions, and Finalizing Your Action Plans and Getting Ready to Update Your Work Plans. CDC, Chris and participating ASTDD SMEs shared notes from the meeting when they returned. ASTDD SMEs who did not attend the meeting but have reviewed ASTDD and state workplans and attended calls include Bev Isman, Lori Cofano, Jay Kumar, Kimberlie Payne, Matt Jacob, Brooke Mehner, Kristin Giordano, and Barb Park.

### **The Board of Directors (BOD)**

The BOD held ZOOM calls on September 12 and October 7. Much discussion centered on the CDC cooperative agreements. Some members shared reports of their state activities. The ASTDD Dental Public Health Policy Committee prepared supportive testimony for ASTDD on ADA resolutions 307 (Dental Care for Veterans), 309 (Role of Dental Health in The Management of Systemic Conditions and Outcomes of Medical and Surgical Procedures), and 3017 (Comprehensive Statement on Oral Health Services During Pregnancy). The BOD approved the testimony for all three and there was little or no opposition to the resolutions during the ADA meeting in October. A portion of the meetings related to how ASTDD should help states respond to recent documents and statements regarding community water fluoridation.

### **New Resources for States**

Based on some of the resources shared in the last issue of *Roundup*, Bev Isman, Kimberlie Payne, and Lori Cofano recorded a presentation on October 16 that highlighted the documents related to needs assessments, policy consensus assessment, and State Oral Health Improvement Plans. The recorded session was shared

during the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) national meeting on October 23 that Lori and Chris Wood attended to answer questions.

### Peer and Member Support Program (PSP)



State dental directors/program managers participating in the PSP still currently include Nicole Reynolds (OK) mentored by Charles “Fritz” Craft (NE), and Elizabeth Lewis (GA) mentored by Robin Miller (VT). Patrick Roberson (NC) and Shenekia Wiggins, DMD (MS) completed their orientations by Lori Cofano. Kimberlie Payne reports there were 11 new associate members in September and October. The next PSP discussion group will be on November 21.

### Fluorides Committee (FC)

Judy Feinstein submitted an abstract for a site visit to a fluoridating water plant in Orlando on the weekend of the NOHC in collaboration with committee members Richard Crask and John Rudolph from Kentucky, who will lead participants on a tour hosted by staff of the plant. The abstract was accepted. Other fluoridation-related abstracts accepted for the NOHC include a weekend workshop on messaging, an update from CDC, and a panel coordinated by committee member Johnny Johnson focused on advocacy and education.

Judy sent an email to ASTDD listservs noting the possibility of the International Longshoremen’s Association strike and its potential impact on shipping of fluoridation additives and attached ASTDD’s tipsheet on dealing with fluoride disruptions. Fortunately, the strike was averted.

At the CDC grantee meeting in October, Judy was able to connect with most of the state fluoridation contacts. Initial work centers around adjusting workplans for CWF activities and some of the state performance measures. Judy will convene an initial Community of Practice session in mid-November to set a bi-monthly schedule through December 2025 and identify topics of common concern.

### Communications Committee (CC)



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CC members Matt Jacob, John Welby and Kimberlie Payne will present a 60-minute panel, *Connecting the Public Health to the Public: How Communications Campaigns Advance Your Programs*, at the 2025 NOHC. The seminar will offer guidance on how your state oral health program can strengthen its capacity to lead or support communication campaigns. Members of the CC are working with Chris Wood and Bradley Cummins, our IT contractor, to update and refresh the ASTDD website. The October 15 Spotlight featured the *Preventing Tobacco/Oral Nicotine Use to Promote Oral Health Policy Statement* presented by Harry Goodman and Judy Feinstein had about 85 attendees. If you missed any previous Spotlights, you can access the links for the 2023 and 2024 Spotlights on the [ASTDD Homepage](#), or the Archived Webcasts and Audioconferences in Members Only for previous Spotlights, or by contacting Kimberlie Payne at [kynemanbhs@gmail.com](mailto:kynemanbhs@gmail.com). The next CC meeting is in November.

## Dental Public Health Policy Committee (DPHPC), Best Practices Committee (BPC), and Healthy Aging Committee (HAC)

The DPHPC met in September; most of the meeting focused on a preliminary review of 14 proposed resolutions that will be presented at the October ADA House of Delegates meeting (see earlier article). The DPHPC is still working on the draft policy statement on Older Adult Oral Health Issues and the final draft of the CareQuest-funded paper on Minimally Invasive Care in Dentistry (MIC). The final version of MIC was shared with CareQuest Institute for review, formatting, and dissemination. Once ASTDD receives approval to disseminate the document it will be shared through various communication channels.

An abstract was submitted and accepted for a 90-minute session at the 2025 NOHC, *Championing Minimally Invasive Care: Aligning Advocacy to Transform Dental Health* with speakers Kasey Wilson, Anita Glicker, and Grace Linn, and Steve Geiermann moderating. Lori Cofano's roundtable abstract, *Minimally Invasive Care: What is it and Are You Using it?* was also accepted.

Members of the HAC were asked to share resources for Healthy Aging Month. Lori attended the virtual Healthy Aging Symposium. Robin Miller, not a member of the HAC, shared Vermont's rack cards that were created through their Alzheimer's Disease and Healthy Aging Program to add information linking the mouth and the brain. CDC and NACDD worked in partnership with the Vermont HHS to co-brand the [rack cards](#). Louisiana, Minnesota, and Idaho noted they have Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure funding: BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act | CDC. North Dakota shared they have a section on their webpage for older adults: <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/health/oral-health-program/oral-health-older-adults>.

In previous months Lori created a one-page proposal and budget for an older adult policy playbook and submitted it to Ayrielle Franco at the Gary and Mary West Foundation (GMWF). Ayrielle Franco extended an invitation to ASTDD to apply for funding from the GMWF for the Advocacy Playbook project. If approved, GMWF will fund a portion of the project. Lori completed the GMWF grant application and budget narrative. Ayrielle presented the project to other organizations in the Funders Oral Health Policy Group (FOHPG) and several are interested in funding the remainder of the project.

Sam Zwetchkenbaum submitted an abstract for the 2025 NOHC that was accepted for a 60-minute presentation, *10,000 People Turn 65 Every Day: What Oral Health Policies are Needed?* with speakers Sam, Deborah Jacobi, and Harry Goodman, and moderator Lori Cofano.

Bradley Cummins developed a pop-up evaluation questionnaire for Best Practice Approach Reports (BPAR). Chris noted there have been some responses as people download the BPARs.



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

Michelle Lee presented on the Association for Dental Safety (ADS), formerly OSAP, during the SAOHC call on October 17. Sarah Stream from ADA also attended. She will be overseeing most of the work pertaining

to sealant programs. Karen Phillips presented an update on the change to the sealant regulations in Oregon. Amy Dark from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) connected Lori with Melinda Nadeau, a school nurse in Maine who is a leader in evidence-based practice to improve health outcomes. Melinda will present to the SAOHC in January.

### Evaluation Activities

The ASTDD Emory evaluation SMEs, Kristin Giordano and Maggie Pustinger have been working with ASTDD SMEs on evaluation plans and activities for the CDC new cooperative agreement and helping with the CDC state 1810 close out survey analysis, the final ASTDD 1811 report, and providing final 1810 report preparation assistance to states. Their weekend workshop for the 2025 NOHC, *Starting Strong: Building a Foundation for Useful Evaluation*, to be facilitated by Kristin Giordano and Maggie Pustinger, has been accepted.



### Data and Oral Health Surveillance Technical Assistance and Training

Kathy Phipps and Brooke Mehner, ASTDD data and surveillance SMEs, provided TA to states for BSS or other surveillance assistance for 79 hours these two months to Ohio, Montana, Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee, Idaho, and New Jersey, and reported and completed state BSS results in the National Oral Health Surveillance System (NOHSS). Brooke created a full 2024 State Synopses export file in Access and sent it to CDC. The following topics were discussed at the October meeting of the BSS CoP: funding a BSS, Missouri’s Preventive Services Program, which uses volunteer dental health care providers to collect dental screening data, and methods for disseminating BSS data (e.g., reports, data briefs, newsletters, websites). Approximately 20 states were represented on the call. Many helpful resources were posted in the chat.

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

After over 17 years of outstanding service to the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center (OHRC), Beth Lowe retired from professional work in early October to begin the next chapter of her life, starting with travels to far-off lands. During Beth’s time at OHRC, she developed and updated numerous manuals and courses and many educational resources for Head Start staff and families. Beth loved to share her knowledge through presentations and training, and she stood out for her dedication to helping others. She was the go-to-person for finding an ideal photo for a publication, creating a sharp-looking presentation, or tracking down hard-to-find information. OHRC is very grateful for Beth’s service, and ASTDD will miss her contributions to the ASTDD/OHRC team. We wish her a joyful retirement.



Year 5 of the Dental Hygienist Liaison (DHL) Project is off to an amazing start! Alongside our continued operational support and guidance for Regional DHL Coordinators and state Dental Hygienist Liaisons, we’re excited to share recent activities and upcoming initiatives:



- We recently joined the NCHBHS Year 5 Full Consortium virtual kickoff meeting, where we connected with partners to reinforce our efforts in advancing oral health in Head Start programs nationwide.
- Our team also hosted a successful webinar, *Enhancing Oral Health through Head Start Health Manager Networks*. DHLs gained insights into health manager networks, how they differ from local Head Start advisory committees, and ideas for potential activities to engage at the state and regional levels.
- Looking ahead, we’re planning revisions to the *Healthy Habits for Happy Smiles* education series, aiming to adapt these materials specifically for the American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) community, ensuring culturally relevant oral health resources.
- We’re also thrilled to announce that the DHL Project has received approval to host a roundtable at the upcoming National Oral Health Conference in Orlando this April. We will discuss our continued initiatives and partnerships, and we look forward to seeing many of you there and sharing more about the project’s impact!

These efforts reflect our ongoing dedication to strengthening the DHL Project, enhancing communication, and driving progress toward better oral health outcomes in Head Start programs nationwide.

### Consortium for Oral Health (COH) Update

The Georgetown OHRC team is sending hearty good wishes to our project officer and colleague, Pamela Vodicka, who is retiring after twenty years in the Public Health Service. A champion for oral health as a part of overall health and an architect of [several programs](#) focusing on oral health integration funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Pam's impact will be felt for years to come. We will miss her leadership and friendship. Congratulations, Pam, and thank you for your service!

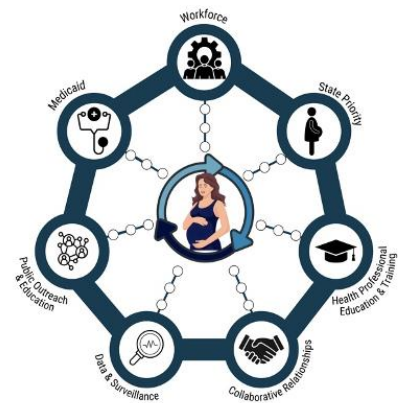


**Celebrating 20 Years**  
  
**CAPTAIN PAMELLA VODICKA**  
 Senior Public Health Analyst  
 Maternal and Child Health Bureau  
**U.S. Public Health Service**  
 2004 - 2024

### Building State Capacity for Integration Learning Collaborative

In October 2024, COH selected five state oral health programs—Idaho, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia—to participate in the Building State Capacity for Integration (BSCI) Learning Collaborative (LC), a 16-month project focused on improving systems-level capacity for integrating oral health care and prenatal care. The LC will run from January 2025 through April 2026. A second LC is planned to run from October 2026 through January 2028.

Using the [Capacity Inventory for Integrating Oral Health Care into Primary Care for Pregnant Women: Tool](#), project teams will assess systems-level capacity factors, prioritize needs, and create action plans to enhance integrating oral health care and prenatal care in their states. During the LC, project teams will gather to share ideas and learn from one another. The consortium will offer technical assistance to help teams develop a practical action plan, monitor progress, overcome challenges, and report on achievements.



## Meetings and Webinars

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

Announcements about meetings and webinars are regularly included in the ASTDD Weekly Digest. These are just some examples of meetings attended.

### **National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA), Baltimore, September 22-25, Tooka Zokaie reporting**

The NNOHA meeting was full of energy with public health dental teams coming together in Baltimore. Themes that stood out during the meeting were funding, workforce development, and visibility. The plenary session included a presentation by Dr. Natalia Chalmers, the NNOHA President's Award recipient for 2024. Her work with CMS has addressed the three themes of the meeting and policy change to increase access to dental care and develop the dental workforce are instrumental. The full post-conference newsletter can be found [here](#). Another focus of the meeting was pathways to public health dentistry by creating partnerships between dental schools and community clinics. NNOHA's white paper on academic partnerships can be found [here](#).

### **American Public Health Association (APHA), Minneapolis, October 27-30, 2024; Tooka Zokaie reporting**

The APHA meeting was jam-packed with 8 oral health section oral sessions, one roundtable, and two poster sessions. Themes of the meeting included the identity of oral health as part of the larger public health system. The oral health section partnered with the LGBTQ+ Caucus of APHA to host a preconference on "Queer Visibility." Lessons included the opportunities for oral health champions to partner with LGBTQ+ organizations to build bridges for equitable and inclusive care. Three oral sessions were focused on global oral health by addressing the global challenges to oral health equity, access, and education. The WHO Global Oral Health Report can be found [here](#). A conference session also dived into misinformation with an overview of the latest water fluoridation challenges. This included updates of the NTP report, recent publications of fluoride and neurodevelopment, and expected updates from EPA. The oral health section celebrated Dr. Scott Tomar, the recipient of the 2024 Knutson Distinguished Service Award in Dental Public Health.

Newly elected Oral Health Section leaders: Chair: Tamanna Tiwari; Chair Elect: Sujay Mehta; Immediate Past Chair: Lyubov Slashcheva; Secretary: Navita Kalair; Treasurer: Alan Berko; Governing Councilors: Katy Battani and 1 open position; Section Councilors: Steffany Chamut, Candace Owen, Erica Caffrey, Anusha Kotha, Priyanka Gudsoorkar; Student Section Liaison: Nithya Ramesh.



APHA Incoming President Deanna J. Wathington “is a public health practitioner and family physician with more than 30 years of practice and academic experience. Her work emphasizes collaboration across multiple sectors to address and optimize community health. She is the clinical director at REACHUP, a public health nonprofit in Tampa, Florida, and an affiliate professor in the University of South Florida College of Public Health. “

The Closing Session was *The Importance of Building Better Partnerships*: Public health leaders emphasized the need for stronger collaboration, particularly between health care and public health, as well as with new and unlikely partners.

***Send any questions, comments, or articles to Bev Isman at [bev.isman@comcast.net](mailto:bev.isman@comcast.net)***