

## **ASTDD Dental Hygienist Liaison Project Annual Report Jan 1, 2021 – Dec 31, 2021**

DHL Project membership includes:

Oral Health Leadership Team: Kathy Hunt- DHL Lead, Gina Sharps- DHL Co-lead, Bev Isman, Katrina Holt, Beth Lowe

Regional DHL Coordinators: Heather Blair (Region I), Kim Attanasi (Region II), Gina Sharps (Region III), Tami Miller (Region IV), Diane Flanigan (Region V), Beth Stewart (Region VI), Kathy Hunt (Region VII), Michelle Baxter (Region VIII), Julie Stage Rosenberg (Region IX), Linda Mann (Region X), Juanita Simpson (Region XI), Mariela Leyba (Region XII)

State DHLs: ADHA member hygienists representing each state. [DHL Roster](#)

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1. List any new members or subcommittee members:

There were several changes in the state DHL positions over the past year, but we have not experienced much difficulty finding and training new hygienists for the state DHL roles.

2. Describe the purpose of your committee:

The DHL Project provides oral health training and technical assistance to Head Start Programs across the United States. ASTDD works in partnership with the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety (NCHBHS) along with the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) to oversee many of the activities for the Dental Hygienist Liaison Project. The DHL project is funded by the Office of Head Start and is currently in year two of a five-year contract. Under the DHL project, one dental hygienist from each state (2 in CA), US Virgin Islands, and DC volunteer to help promote oral health for pregnant women and children enrolled in Head Start, serving as a communication link between NCHBHS and Head Start programs. Regional DHL Coordinators provide mentorship to their state DHLs and serve as a contact for regional Head Start staff. [Click for more information on this project.](#)

3. List your committee accomplishments for the last calendar year.

In addition to the normal activities of the project, highlights from 2021 activities include:

- Presented roundtable session *Head Start and the Dental Hygienist Liaison Project: Something to Smile About!* for NOHC 2021.
- Presented *Something to Smile About! Head Start and the DHL project* to the Head Start Regional Health Specialists and introduced new Regional DHL Coordinators for Regions XI (AIAN) and XII (MSHS).
- Five one-hour webinars were provided to DHLs to support their DHL role. Topics included *Using Social Media Messages to Support Head Start Parents and Caregivers during COVID-19, Oral Health and COVID, Introduction to new Head Start NCHBHS, Oral Health & Trauma Informed Care, and Tips for Getting Your Presentation Accepted and Making it Engaging.*
- There were 113 posts on the Head Start discussion list
- Completion of data collection and analysis from the DHL Annual Assessment. In addition to fulfilling the basic role of the DHL, findings included:
  - 40% reported an increase in access to care for Head Start children
  - 18% reported implementing an on-site fluoride varnish program
  - OH Team conducted a day long annual RDHLC meeting virtually.
  - 20% reported that programs used NCHBHS social media materials in educational messages promoting brushing children’s teeth with fluoride toothpaste
  - Challenged parents to take photos of family making recipes we’ve shared
  - Put water bottles in classrooms and encouraged children to drink water throughout the day
  - Most Rewarding Aspects of Being a DHL:
    - Connecting with families and Head Start staff and seeing their genuine appreciation
    - Seeing the work of DHLs makes a difference
    - Training staff on best practices
    - Serving as a point of contact for oral health
    - Emphasizing the importance of oral health on learning and overall health
- Completed a major update for the ASTDD DHL webpage.
- The DHL project and its leaders received the following recognitions in 2021:
  - ASTDD 2021 Distinguished Service Award was presented to Michelle Landrum, former DHL Project lead, for her significant contributions to the DHL project and other early childhood activities
  - DHL Project recognized as ASTDD best practice approach for collaborative partnerships

- Dental Hygienist Liaisons: Impact of COVID-19 article was published in ADHA's *Access* magazine featured state DHLs Kim Attanasi (New York), Michelle Martin (Utah), Deb Schardt (Nebraska), and Tasha Wendel (South Dakota)

4. Describe the future activities planned by your committee:

- Provide support to state and regional DHLs through quarterly calls and webinars, the DHL discussion list, and responding to their requests for assistance.
- Recruit state and regional DHLs as needed.
- Offer oral health presentations in each state and Head Start region.
- Identify oral health services in each state to share with Head Start programs.
- Strengthen relationships with the Head Start regional health specialists.
- Develop new internal documents for quality improvement
- Keep DHL webpage on the ASTDD website updated and relevant
- Create a DHL directory including updated bio sketches and pictures
- Promote the DHL project at the ADHA and NOHC annual conferences.

5. Describe any subcommittees your committee uses, their roles and activities:

Our state DHLs and RDHLCs function as our subcommittees. The state DHLs provide the following volunteer activities as needed and their time allows:

- Provide a communication link between NCHBHS and Head Start agencies in their states.
- Collaborate with state organizations such as oral health programs and Head Start state collaboration offices.
- Provide oral health presentations at state conferences and meetings.
- Offer strategies to improve access to oral health care for pregnant women and children.
- Work with oral health professionals to establish partnerships with local Head Start programs to provide staff education and training.
- Share information about the importance of oral health and regular oral health visits, good nutrition and oral hygiene practices, and oral-injury-prevention strategies with Head Start program staff.
- Serve on Head Start committees (e.g., Head Start health manager networks, Head Start health services advisory committees), oral health advisory boards, and coalitions to promote the oral health of Head Start participants