

## Potential Board of Director Member Questionnaire

**Name:** Prasida Khanal, BDS, MPH

**Position you wish to run for:** Director

- 1. Service on the ASTDD Board of Directors is a significant time commitment. It includes participation in a minimum of one 1½ hr phone call a month. Preparation for the call will customarily require several hours of reading various documents prior to the call. In addition, BOD members are frequently required to review and approve various requests and/or reports in between the monthly calls. Can you commit to preparing for, and active participation on, these monthly calls and timely response to requests that occur in between calls?**

Yes

- 2. Service on the BOD requires attendance at a minimum of one face-to-face meeting a year as well as occasional meetings with partner organizations as an ASTDD BOD representative. Are you able to commit to attendance at the National Oral Health Conference and up to two other meetings with partner organizations a year?**

Yes

- 3. Why would you like to serve on the BOD?**

Serving as Minnesota's State Oral Health Director since 2017 has given me a front-row seat to both the progress and the persistent challenges in advancing oral health at the state and national levels. During this time, I have worked collaboratively with partners across public health, Medicaid, academic institutions, and community organizations to strengthen prevention systems, expand access to care, and promote evidence-based policy.

We are now entering a particularly pivotal and uncertain moment for state oral health programs. Federal funding reductions, the loss of seasoned dental public health leaders, and the elimination of key CDC oral health program have created instability in infrastructure that took decades to build. These shifts threaten evidence-based oral health programs, surveillance capacity, workforce development, technical assistance, and the continuity of prevention initiatives that directly impact vulnerable populations.

I would like to serve on the ASTDD Board of Directors because I believe strong, experienced leadership is essential during times of transition. My years as a State Oral Health Director have given me practical insight into navigating funding constraints,

building resilient partnerships, and advocating for oral health within broader public health systems. I understand the operational realities states face and the importance of maintaining a unified national voice to protect and strengthen oral health infrastructure.

Serving on the Board would allow me to contribute strategically to reimagining the ASTDD's structure/operations, mentoring emerging leaders, and helping shape a forward-looking vision for CDC funded and non-funded state oral health programs. I am deeply committed to ensuring that, even amid uncertainty, we preserve core public health functions, promote equity, and continue advancing population-based oral health initiatives.

At this critical juncture, I am motivated to share not only my experience and dedication, but also the practical skills I have developed as a State Oral Health Director. I bring a strong understanding of legislative processes at both the state and federal levels, including budget development, appropriations advocacy, and policy analysis. I have worked closely with lawmakers, health agencies, and partner organizations to advance oral health priorities, translate data into compelling policy recommendations, and navigate complex regulatory environments. My experience managing public health infrastructure during fiscal constraints, building cross-sector coalitions, and strategically aligning oral health within broader health initiatives positions me to contribute meaningfully to Board-level governance. I am prepared to support ASTDD strengthen its national voice, respond thoughtfully to policy and funding challenges, and support states in sustaining effective, evidence-based oral health programs.

#### **4. How would your service on the BOD benefit ASTDD?**

State oral health programs are facing leadership gaps, funding uncertainty, loss of federal infrastructure, and increasing expectations around equity, data, accountability, and sustainability. Because of my experience as the State Oral Health Director at the Minnesota Department of Health, ASTDD will gain a dental public health leader who can immediately fill in these gaps for state dental programs. Some examples are listed below.

##### **Help States Survive and Adapt in the Post-CDC Oral Health Era**

I understand firsthand how state oral health programs are funded, justified, and sustained through HRSA, CDC, block grants, and state mechanisms. I can help ASTDD support states with practical strategies, tools, and guidance to maintain programs despite shrinking federal oral health presence.

### **Strengthen ASTDD's Technical Support to States**

My hands-on management of the Basic Screening Survey, contracts, calibration, data systems, and school partnerships allows me to help ASTDD improve how states operationalize surveillance, not just talk about it. I will bring solutions that are implementable.

### **Elevate ASTDD's Role in Data, Research, and Policy Advocacy**

By integrating periodontal measures into BRFSS and studying ER dental utilization, I bring experience in turning surveillance into policy-relevant evidence. I can help ASTDD strengthen how data is used for national advocacy and state justification.

### **Advance ASTDD's Health Equity Leadership from Theory to Practice**

Through leading a Health Equity Leadership Team and representing underserved communities as a woman of color and immigrant in dental public health space, I will help ASTDD ensure equity is operationalized in leadership roles and programs, not just stated in principles.

### **Provide Mentorship and Continuity as Experienced Dental Leaders Exit**

With nine years as a state dental director and ASTDD leadership training, I can mentor newer directors and help ASTDD preserve institutional knowledge during this leadership transition period.

### **Strengthen ASTDD's Communication, Visibility, and Member Engagement**

As an ASTDD Communications Award recipient, I can help ASTDD improve how it tells the story of state oral health work and engages members effectively.

### **Contribute High-Level Public Health Dental Expertise**

As ADPH board-eligible and actively advancing in the field, I bring current, evidence-based, and nationally aligned public health dental leadership to ASTDD's strategic direction. My service benefits ASTDD by helping it become more practical, more supportive to states, more equity-driven, more data-informed, and stronger in leadership continuity during a critical transition period for state oral health programs.

- 5. What special talent, skill, or knowledge would you bring to the ASTDD BOD? Examples include financial, legal, or communications/media expertise, understanding of Medicaid, FQHC's or community health centers, or strategic planning ability.**

My nine years of service as the Dental Director at the Minnesota Department of Health have given me a rare combination of state oral health leadership, legislative insight, program implementation, financial knowledge, and national grant management experience that directly aligns with the needs of ASTDD at this pivotal time.

I have served as Principal Investigator for multiple HRSA, CDC, Prevention Block Grant, and state-funded oral health initiatives, giving me deep operational knowledge of how state oral health programs are built, sustained, evaluated, and defended, especially in times when federal oral health infrastructure is uncertain and CDC oral health program support is diminished. This experience allows me to contribute practical strategies to ASTDD for helping states navigate funding instability, program sustainability, and innovation.

Beyond program management, I have served as Co-Chair of a division-level Health Equity Leadership Team, where I worked to embed equity into systems, policy, and program design. As a woman of color and an immigrant, I bring lived experience that reflects the underserved communities state oral health programs are meant to reach. I represent voices that are often underrepresented in leadership but central to the mission of public health dentistry.

I have also led and managed all aspects of Minnesota's Basic Screening Survey (BSS) for third graders, from contracting and partnerships with external clinical providers to calibration, data management, school communication, and quality assurance. This gives me hands-on expertise in one of the core public health surveillance tools that many states struggle to operationalize effectively. I have led and spread innovative research initiatives, including the addition of periodontal questions to BRFSS and analysis of ER utilization for dental conditions, expanding how states can use data to inform policy and advocacy.

My contributions to the field have been recognized nationally, including receiving the ASTDD Communications Award (2024) and completion of the Minnesota Senior Leadership Institute and other highly competitive state leadership trainings. I am also board eligible in Dental Public Health (ADPH) and plan to challenge the Oral Exam in June 2026, demonstrating my ongoing commitment to advancing the field at the highest professional level.

At a time when ASTDD is experiencing the loss of seasoned dental leaders, my experience offers continuity, mentorship capacity, and operational expertise that can

help fill this leadership gap. I understand both the technical mechanics of state oral health programs and the strategic leadership required to guide them through change.

My service to ASTDD will bring:

- Deep experience in state oral health program administration
- Expertise in federal and state grant leadership
- Practical knowledge of BSS, surveillance, and data systems
- Strong grounding in health equity and inclusive leadership
- Legislative and policy navigation experience
- Commitment to mentoring and strengthening the next generation of state dental directors

I am committed to helping ASTDD remain the anchor for state oral health leadership, innovation, and equity during a time of transition and challenge for the profession.

**6. Describe previous leadership experience with other organizations.**

I serve as the Ex-officio member in Minnesota's legislative Dental Services Advisory Committee (DSAC) and on the Minnesota Oral Health Coalition Board

**7. Describe your past involvement with ASTDD. Have you ever served on or chaired a committee? What projects have you been involved in? How have you demonstrated your commitment to ASTDD and its mission?**

I co-authored the [ASTDD school-based dental sealant program best practice approach report](#)

**8. Please provide any additional information that would help inform the Board of Directors and members about your interest and qualifications.**

Please refer to my [CV](#) for details