



Well, I'm sure we all are looking forward to a "Happier" New Year. While reflecting on 2020, however, I do want to point out some positive things that occurred or that I learned:

- Some of the media finally decided to devote significant efforts to help the general public understand the significant roles of science and public health in many practical ways. Some of our parents might now stop asking, "What is it exactly that you do?"
- State oral health program directors and staff showed the rest of the public health sector that they aren't just about "teeth" but have valuable skills that cross over into other important public health areas.
- State dental directors participated in biweekly ZOOM calls to share information and to provide mutual support. They displayed true characteristics of a "family."
- Most of you got the opportunity to work at home (or wherever) so you know what Chris and us ASTDD consultants have been doing for years. No, we don't work in our pajamas all day, especially when we have to be on ZOOM calls!
- Those wonderful cloth masks really keep your face warm on chilly days when you're taking a walk or riding your bike!
- At the end of the December 17 call, ASTDD President Chris Farrell asked directors to share one or two words about their feelings going into 2021. This is the WORD cloud that resulted.



State Dental Director Calls and COVID Related Workgroups and Partnerships

ASTDD continues to participate in calls and emails of the COVID-19 Public-Private Partner Dental Coordination Group comprised of federal agencies and almost 30 national organizations to share information about activities. Dental directors continue to meet, usually biweekly. Here are a few issues from the November 12 and December 3 and 17 calls:

- On the November call, dental directors provided input to the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Workgroup on questions for an assessment that will be used to create a checklist to direct dental directors to resources to improve their state program's ability to respond to pandemics.
- The December 3 call included presentations by Mona Van Kanegan (IL) facilitating discussions on the roles of dental directors during COVID-19 related to handling complaints about dental offices, writing guidance, highlighting oral health disparities, and working with dental associations and dental boards, and Katya Mauritson (CO) sharing information from the COVID-19 Safety Net Dental Response Project
- The December 17 call featured CDC infection prevention and control subject matter expert and Dental Officer, Dr. Michele Neuberger, answering questions. The group also discussed a Rhode Island dental office COVID cluster, how states were handling reports of dental offices not following guidance/requirements, in what tier dental providers were being placed for receiving the vaccine, and SDF placement by non-dental providers.

The COVID-19 School-Based Programs Workgroup activities are reported under the School Health section.

ASTDD Peer and Member Support Program

We currently have six dental directors/program managers in the mentoring program. Kimberlie Payne contacted 17 new associate members during the past two months for orientation.

Data Committee and National Oral Health Data Portal

Kathy Phipps and Mike Manz continue to help states and territories plan for surveys or other surveillance assistance including Connecticut, Alabama, Nevada, Wyoming, Louisiana and Georgia. Kathy also finalized the biannual Salary

Survey for dental directors and program managers and the 2021 State Synopses questionnaire. With the National Oral Health Data Portal website design mostly settled and Tableau style guides formalized, John O'Malley has been spending the past few months creating the Tableau dashboards that visualize all of the data. These dashboards are complex and comprehensive and branded with an appealing ASTDD logo and purple/orange primary color scheme. There are dashboards for individual datasets and for data aggregations such as the NOHSS, state-data, HP 2020, HP 2030, and COVID dashboard.

Communications Committee

The Committee has finalized communication plans for all ASTDD communication vehicles such as the Weekly Digest, Roundup, the website and listservs, Spotlight webinars and the Annual Report. We encourage all committees to create communication plans for any ASTDD documents or webinars and encourage states to also use the [Communication Plan Template](#). The next spotlight is scheduled for January 20 at 3:00 EST on "Engaging the media during Children's Dental Health Month" with Jay Kumar DDS, MPH and Maritza Cabezas DDS, MPH from CA presenting. Check the ASTDD Calendar in Members Only on the website for a link.

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

Work continues on the new Data Dissemination Best Practice Approach Report (BPAR), the update to the *Oral Health of Children, Adolescents and Adults with Special Health Care Needs BPAR*, and updates to the policy statement on *Nutrition Education and Healthy Eating in School Settings*. A new policy statement on [Healthy People 2030 Oral Health Objectives](#) was posted in November.

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

ASTDD, the DentaQuest Partnership, and the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP) presented a webinar on December 10 that explored how COVID-19 has significantly impacted school-based health care programs and the ability to provide access to children who have the greatest need for these services. More than 1340 people registered for the webinar! Access the PowerPoint slides [here](#) and the recording [here](#). The COVID-19 [Summary Report](#) and Resource Guide are complete and posted to the ASTDD website [SAOHC page](#) under item #3. On the December Sealants CoP call, CDC staff participated and offered TA on new CDC documents for considerations for school sealant programs during COVID-19. The group also discussed newly released [CDC Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) documents and resources](#).

ASTDD Fluorides Committee (FC)

Meetings were held in November and December. The FC finalized and sent guidelines for talking points for states to use in responding to the expected release of the National Toxicology Program's report (*NTP Monograph on the Systematic Review of Fluoride Exposure and Neurodevelopmental and Cognitive Health Effects*) and also provided a letter for ASTDD to submit to the National Academies with comments on the current version of the report. The Community Water Fluoridation Community of Practice met on December 7, 2020, facilitated by Judy Feinstein. Tracy Boehmer, CDC DOH Environmental Engineer, reviewed the current Cooperative Agreement guidance for Performance Progress and Monitoring Report Performance Measures for CWF. She also noted upcoming changes in WFRS (Water Fluoridation Reporting System) and the expected publication in the Federal Register of a recommended range for optimal fluoridation of public water systems. Participants also discussed state policies on early notification when systems indicate their intent to stop fluoridating, or when they experience temporary suspensions for repairs or other interruptions. Updates on the pending report from the NTP and on a new fluoridation feeder/tablet system were also discussed. Judy Feinstein now maintains and updates the Fluoridation Rollback Catalog and provides quarterly reports.

Healthy Aging Committee (HAC)

The first Healthy Aging Project Workgroup meeting was held via Zoom on Wednesday December 16 with sixteen participants. State oral health programs and state units on aging participating on the workgroup include Alabama, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, Virginia and Wisconsin. The workgroup brainstormed potential topic areas for the Older Adult Oral Health Promotion Toolkit. As a reminder, this work is currently supported through a grant from the Gary and Mary West

Foundation to develop a toolkit for state oral health programs, state units on aging and area agencies on aging to educate older adults on the importance of oral health to overall health. This is a three-year grant that will end in December of 2022.

Evaluation Activities

JoAnna Hillman 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 to ASTDD committees on specific projects. On November 13 they presented a webinar on Survey Methods, focusing on design, implementation, and reporting for ASTDD consultants, and repeated the webinar for state oral health programs and evaluators on December 10. Janelle Gowgiel has completed review and revisions to the 2012 ASTDD resource, *Toolkit for Planning, Evaluating, and Improving Interagency Collaboration for Oral Health Programs*. Look for it to be posted soon on the ASTDD Collaboration Improvement, Planning and Evaluation webpage along with a webinar on how to use it.

2021 Virtual National Oral Health Conference (NOHC) Planning



The call for abstracts for 60 minute seminars for the 2021 virtual NOHC resulted in 49 abstract submissions. The Planning Committee reviewed and rated all abstracts using the NOHC Cadmium software, with the top 11 being chosen for the available time slots on three consecutive Fridays starting April 16. Abstracts for roundtables to be held on April 17 and posters on April 24 are due on January 15 (see <https://www.nationaloralhealthconference.com/> for more details). Available time slots are much reduced from the number of presentations during in-person NOHC years. All sessions will be pre-recorded, with speakers available for questions during their appointed times. There will be no oral presentation sessions as the poster presentations will be pre-recorded.

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

Just a few updates as we are still getting organized to work with the new Center staff. One of our goals for this year was to engage a dental hygienist who could serve as a Regional Dental Hygienist Liaison Coordinator (RDHL) for Head Start Region XI American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) programs, and one for RegionXII Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs. We are pleased to announce that Juanita Simpson EPDH, BS from Oregon will be our liaison to Region XI. Juanita is a member of the Chickasaw Nation. She worked for 23 years on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Juanita retired from the United States Public Health Service in 2018. Mariela Leyba is the new RDHL liaison for Region XII. Mariela is an Oral Health Educator and Lead Dental Sealant Coordinator for the central New Mexico area with the New Mexico Department of Health/Office of Oral Health. She is an active member of the New Mexico Oral Health Coalition and has served as the New Mexico Head Start Dental Hygiene Liaison since 2015. Continuing RDHLs include Heather Blair (Region I), Kathy Hunt (Regions II and VII), Gina Sharps (Region III), Tami Miller (Region IV), Diane Flanagan (Region V), Beth Stewart (Region VI), Melissa Utley (Region VIII), Julie Stage Rosenberg (Region IX), and Linda Mann (Region X). NCHBHS oral health staff, ASTDD consultants and RDHLs from Regions I-X participated in a ZOOM call on December 15 to discuss an overview of the new Center and this year's workplan.

Center for Oral Health Systems Integration and Improvement (COHSII)

The COHSII project team has identified a set of [oral health quality indicators](#) (measures) for state oral health programs to monitor and improve the quality of oral health care for women of child-bearing age, pregnant women, children, and adolescents (MCH population). ASTDD, the Dental Quality Alliance (DQA), and the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center (OHRC) are partners in the COHSII consortium. Kathy Phipps represents ASTDD as a member of a [Quality Indicator Advisory Team](#) that guides the project. States that piloted implementation of the indicators informed their refinement and development of related resources such as a readiness assessment, a user guide, technical

specifications, and a reporting template. Find all these resources on the [project website](#). Completing the readiness assessment provides the opportunity for state oral health programs with the opportunity to reach out to the state MCH director, Medicaid staff, epidemiologists/data analysts, and others who serve the MCH population about data collection, sharing, and reporting. Making these connections can help oral health programs build and enhance relationships with these colleagues. Assessment findings can be used to develop an action plan to determine which indicators to pursue for calculation and reporting, and to create a longitudinal plan for increasing data collection, analysis, and reporting capacity.

Building on recent activities about state oral health improvement plans, ASTDD hosted a webinar on November 18 that introduced the indicators and readiness assessment, and shared experiences from pilot states that were implementing the indicators (Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Rhode Island). Webinar speakers included Adam Barefoot, Chris Farrell, Sarah Kolo, Brooke Mehner, Diptee Ojha, Tracy Rodgers, and Mona Van Kanegan. (A recording is available from OHRC; contact [Sarah Kolo](#) for the link). State oral health programs are invited to [request technical assistance](#) from COHSII to assess the status of oral health care in your state, explore the readiness assessment, and chart a path toward an oral-health-improvement project.

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

National Conference of State Legislators, Public Health Approaches to Children's Oral Health During Covid-19, Sam Zwetchkenbaum reporting.

The [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\)](#) supports state legislators and legislative staff with timely information and data to inform policy options on a broad variety of issues from Agriculture to Youth Violence. Their Health team, with a staff of 17, has assembled for 2020-21 a [Public Health Webinar Series](#), which kicked off on December 4 with a one-hour presentation on the topic *Public Health Approaches to Children's Oral Health During COVID-19*. Dr. Paul Glassman, associate dean for research and engagement, College of Dental Medicine, California North State University, shared with policymakers how teledentistry has been used in the development of the virtual dental home



model to improve access and how this strategy can be expanded during the pandemic to increase efficiency and continue to reach vulnerable populations. Dr. Samuel Zwetchkenbaum, state dental director, Rhode Island Department of Health and Dr. Rhonda Stokley, state public health dental director, Texas Department of

Health and Human Services, reviewed their traditional work with school screening and preventive services and strategies to address challenges related to COVID-19. Dr. Glassman provided resources to engage legislators around teledentistry policy in their state, and resources developed by ASTDD and the National Association of School Nurses around dental screening during COVID-19 were also shared. The webinar was recorded and is available on the [NCSL YouTube Channel](#).

2020 National Medicaid/Medicare/CHIP Oral Health Virtual Symposium (MSDA), Dec. 8-10, 2020, Christine Farrell reporting

During the annual business meeting held on the evening of December 7, I provided an update on the national data portal system that ASTDD is funded to develop; MSDA is an integral partner in this effort. I also presented with MSDA Executive Director, Mary Foley, during the session, *Maintaining Access and Utilization During a Public Health State of Emergency*, which described the dental public health response from state oral health programs and state Medicaid agencies. I provided an overview of the dental public health response including the bi-weekly dental director calls and the activities of two new workgroups: the COVID-19 school-based programs workgroup and the public health emergency preparedness workgroup. In addition, I described responses to Covid-19 that included SOHP staff being detailed for contact tracing, disbursement of PPE to dental providers, and development of dental protocols for public health programs including schools and nursing homes.

I also attended two other sessions. One session was *Medicare Advantage: New Strategies for Advancing Value through Dental Care Benefits*. The speaker, Michael Adelberg, provided information about Medicare Advantage plans and how seniors can receive dental coverage, as well as discussing potential ideas and strategies for a future Medicare dental

benefit. This topic is of interest to both MSDA and ASTDD members and could be an area for a joint project. The second session on *Silver Diamine Fluoride*, presented by Dr. Peter Milgrom, provided the latest evidence for the use of silver diamine fluoride and ways that states and providers may optimize policy to support its use. Again, this is another area where both ASTDD and MSDA members are interested in the promotion and use of this as an evidence-based practice. Sarah Finne from the NH Medicaid and Oral Health Programs and Alani Jackson from the CA Medicaid program presented on *Building a Network of Value-Based Providers and Stakeholders*. Slides from the entire symposium can be found on the [MSDA website](#). Many ASTDD dental directors and associate members are also involved with MSDA, and both organizations are jointly involved with several projects. I look forward to having ASTDD continue working with MSDA.

Look for the next issue of *Roundup* in March 2021. Send any questions or comments to Bev Isman at bev.isman@comcast.net