

# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## Developing a State Oral Health Plan

In 2001, the Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) charged the Division of Oral Health to convene a state team to develop a state oral health plan and convene a statewide oral health summit where the plan would be unveiled for comment from key leaders. A steering committee was created to shepherd the process with representatives from state agencies, Illinois state wide oral health coalition IFLOSS, dental professional associations, public health associations, the Illinois legislature, and health advocacy organizations. The committee reviewed strategy suggestions and findings from oral health efforts/research conducted in Illinois and proposed oral health priorities for the state.

The “burden of disease” regarding oral health was well documented in the U.S. Surgeon General’s landmark report, *Oral Health in America*, published in May 2000. Illinois used the Surgeon General’s report as a springboard to engage partners interested in improving oral health and was among the first of the states to develop a state oral health plan. Illinois’ Community Oral Health Infrastructure Development Plan, developed in 2000 to meet the needs of the dental and dental hygiene educational institutions and communities, served as the foundation upon which the state oral health plan was built.

Input to the oral health plan was gathered through a series of community meetings. At the Statewide Oral Health Summit, participants were asked to provide feedback. Written comments from 25 individuals and organizations were reviewed by the steering committee. The result of the process, which took 18 months, was the first Illinois State Oral Health Plan.

*Roadmap to the Future: Oral Health in Illinois (2002)*, Illinois’ first oral health plan, used the five action steps from the framework established in *Oral Health in America* as policy goals and included scores of priorities and recommendations for strategic interventions from the series of town hall meetings and statewide summit. With the intent to build a culture of good oral health across the state and guide actions aimed at improving oral health status, this initial effort was used as a model for other state oral health plans throughout the nation.

*Illinois Oral Health Plan II (IOHP II 2007)* also followed the framework of the Surgeon General’s report, reviewing the state’s progress in addressing the original five-year plan and making recommendations for the future. A series of town hall meetings and a statewide summit informed the process.

Notably, neither of these plans was designed to direct any one group or entity, but instead was intended to be broadly inclusive, offering guidance for those interested in improving the oral health of Illinoisans to plan and to evaluate oral health activities. With this comprehensive approach, it was expected that every stakeholder organization would be able to see opportunities to align its actions with the state plan.

In the summer of 2011, the IDPH received a grant from the Healthy People 2020 Action Project to support the development of an Illinois oral health plan aligned with *Healthy People 2020* national health objectives. The Department sought the funding in response to lessons learned in attempting to document progress in implementing the previous Illinois oral health plans. In 2012, *Healthy People, Healthy Smiles* is the third iteration of state-level oral health planning in Illinois. Unlike previous Illinois oral health plans, this edition’s framework, while informed by the Surgeon General’s 2000 Call

to Action, is a product of stakeholder input and is modeled after *Healthy People 2020* national oral health objectives. Further, *Healthy People, Healthy Smiles* is designed to assure an *action* agenda for improving oral health in Illinois. Rather than simply offering guidance to the many individuals and organizations with a stake in the oral health of Illinois residents, the intent of this effort is to catalyze an ongoing process of leadership and collaboration to plan, to implement, to monitor and to evaluate the impacts of oral health interventions. Accountability and measurement are the hallmarks of such a process, and as such, this document should be considered the first step in the next cycle of continuous oral health improvement actions in Illinois.

To assure broad support and engagement, previous plans had been purposefully comprehensive, but in practice, implementation had proven challenging to manage, to track or to report. With few easily measurable objectives and little focus on how successes would be defined, progress was sporadically and often only anecdotally captured, and accountabilities were not often clearly defined. At the outset of the *Healthy People, Healthy Smiles* initiative, stakeholders requested a “report card” on the progress of implementing the IOHP II.

Each plan was divined as a working document with a comprehensive vision that can be embraced by all involved in the process. Each plan articulates goals, priorities and strategies to improve the oral health of all Illinoisans. Its goals reflect specific priorities, recommended strategies and action steps recommend on how to address each goal. The plans identify potential collaborators and resources needed to support each of the priority areas. The plans also serve as a guide for policymakers and organizations. Over the years, resolutions have been developed by various organizations to adopt either the entire plan or specific elements and the plan is used to exemplify to funders and to key policymakers that a cohesive and comprehensive approach to addressing oral health has been developed in Illinois.

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