

# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## Statewide Dental Coalition Support

In June 2007, the then Governor and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Secretary convened a Dental Action Committee (DAC), broad-based group of stakeholders, to increase access to care for poor and low-income children in Maryland. This was in response to the death of a 12-year old Maryland child who passed away as the result of an untreated dental infection that spread to his brain. The DAC reviewed dental reports and data to develop a comprehensive series of recommendations, building on past dental initiatives, lessons learned, and best practices from other states, culminating in a comprehensive report to the Secretary on September 11, 2007. The DAC's report called for establishing a dental home for all Medicaid-covered children. To accomplish this goal, the DAC recommended several changes to the Medicaid program for connecting eligible children with a dentist to receive comprehensive dental services on a regular basis. The DAC also included suggestions to enhance education, outreach, dental public health infrastructure, provider participation, and provider scope of practice.

In June 2009, the DAC formally began its transition from a Department-based (DHMH) committee focused on improving dental access for underserved Maryland children to an independent statewide oral health coalition, called the Maryland Dental Action Coalition (MDAC). MDAC's mission is to develop and maintain a statewide partnership of individuals and [organizations](#) committed to improved health among all Marylanders through increased oral health prevention, education, advocacy and access to dental care. By March 2010, the MDAC received funding from the DentaQuest Foundation, secured an office, and hired an Executive Director. With the assistance of OOH staff, formal organizational bylaws were developed and eventually approved. After establishing formal governance, enlisting new partners, and electing officers, the MDAC evolved into an effective statewide advocacy dental organization, and has partnered with OOH in taking positions on important oral health legislation. The MDAC also worked with several partners, including Medicaid and OOH, to develop and launch a State Oral Health Plan in May 2011. This plan was highlighted at an Oral Health Summit that the MDAC co-sponsored in October 2011, and its proceedings were published in 2012 in a special issue of the Journal of Public Health Dentistry.

Sustainability is a core issue for the MDAC. After achieving 501(c)(3) status in May 2012, MDAC secured a Kaiser Foundation grant to develop a pilot program for the final unfunded DAC report recommendation, a school dental screening and case management program. MDAC also received a competitive one-year planning grant from the DentaQuest Foundation to develop a state oral health alliance, called the Maryland Oral Health Learning Alliance (MOHLA). MDAC also received an operational grant award from the DentaQuest Foundation to fund years two and three of the MOHLA. Additionally, MDAC received grants from the Horizon Foundation to support MDAC's work of enabling the oral health practitioner to become an effective advocate for promoting healthy lifestyles, dietary choices and health equity. The Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation discretionary grant was awarded in 2014 to support a consultant working to create an options paper as the first step towards developing a four year adult oral health policy agenda for the State of Maryland. Further, the coalition entered into a strategic alliance with the OOH to support the successful oral health literacy social marketing/media campaign entitled "Healthy Teeth, Healthy Kids (HTHK)." The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation discretionary grant was awarded in December 2014 to create, test and print brochures in plain language about the benefits of fluoride and of using fluoridated drinking water for good oral health. This brochure will accompany the Healthy Teeth, Healthy Kids campaign. MDAC was at the center of the March 2012 launch of the campaign, which featured Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, Senator Ben Cardin, and Congressman Elijah Cummings.

MDAC has co-sponsored with various partners a number of pediatric dentistry training courses for general dentists from the public health and private sector who participate with Medicaid as well as dental courses for pediatricians. MDAC also convened a second Oral Health Summit in December 2013, whose purpose was to highlight the progress of the state oral health plan such as the various CE training courses coordinated by MDAC and OOH on dental public health and the expansion of the Healthy Teeth, Healthy Kids campaigns in English and Spanish. Finally, MDAC also is continuing its strategic partnership with the OOH in extending and maintaining the HTHK. More detailed findings about the SOHP are included below.

On May 17, 2011, officials from the MDAC, the former DHMH Secretary, and Congressman Elijah E. Cummings launched Maryland's first statewide oral health plan. This plan provided a blueprint that oral health professionals can follow to ensure that Maryland remains a national leader in improving the oral health of its citizens.

### **Lessons Learned:**

#### **Coalition Formation:**

Having early buy-in from the original state government convened Dental Action Committee (DAC) members facilitated its transition into the independent statewide dental coalition (MDAC).

During the planning stages of MDAC, OOH hired a coalition consultant (Fran Butterfoss of Coalition Works) to guide the development of the coalition. It was extremely helpful to have someone with expertise guiding the process.

#### **Maryland Oral Health Plan (MOHP):**

Prior to writing the state oral health plan, OOH and MDAC did not have a clear vision or mission for the state oral health plan. OOH started to write concept papers to provide guidance on the development of the state oral health plan, but after sharing the papers with MDAC it seemed the papers lack focus. Then they decided on a systematic approach and surveyed CDC funded states with existing plans to see the various ways state oral health plan were developed. After OOH's analysis, we formed three committees to focus outlining and developing the three focus areas of the state oral health plan. Those focus areas were the following: 1) Access to Care; 2) Oral Disease and Injury Prevention; and 3) Oral Health Literacy and Education. Once the 3 committee chairs reported their sections to the Chairperson overseeing the Maryland Oral Health Plan, an advisory committee met to discuss the sections, materials, structure, edits, comments and additional content to begin preparing a more detailed written MOHP.

The MDAC needed to be in place and functioning as an independent entity to have an effective MOHP.

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### **Contact Person(s) for Inquiries:**

Debony Hughes, Director, Office of Oral Health, Maryland Department of Health, 201 W. Preston St., Baltimore, MD 21201, Phone: 410-767-5942, Email: [debony.hughes@maryland.gov](mailto:debony.hughes@maryland.gov)

John Welby, Director, Social Marketing and Oral Health Literacy, Office of Oral Health, Maryland Department of Health, 201 W. Preston St., Baltimore, MD 21201 Phone: 410-767-7635, Email: [John.welby@maryland.gov](mailto:John.welby@maryland.gov)