



# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

---

**Practice Number:** 36011  
**Submitted By:** North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative  
**Submission Date:** March 2020  
**Last Reviewed:** March 2020  
**Last Updated:** March 2020

## Effective Coalition Building to Advance Systems Change

The North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative (NCOHC) is a statewide coalition focused on resolving consumer-level and systemic barriers to optimal oral health. NCOHC is a program of a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation (FHLI). The Collaborative's efforts are focused on raising awareness, leveraging community engagement, and driving sustainable policy change.

NCOHC is led by Zachary Brian, DMD, MHA, who oversees two full-time staff and contracts with a part-time political strategist in carrying out the Collaborative's mission. More than 600 individual and organizational members play an integral role in driving our impact through collective action. The NCOHC is supported through a programmatic budget funded by the BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation and The Duke Endowment.

Recently, we have focused on advancing innovative policy changes to expand access to preventive oral health care in North Carolina. These efforts have included co-sponsoring a regulatory change that would allow "direct access" for dental hygienists, permitting them for the first time to perform preventive oral health care services without a prior exam by a dentist. Our signature advocacy event, Oral Health Day, drew a record number of participants to the North Carolina legislature in 2019 to promote policies to increase access to oral health care. We have also educated thousands of North Carolinians, including providers, policymakers, dental students, and the general public. In 2019 alone, an NCOHC-organized fact-finding trip to San Francisco introduced providers, policymakers and supporters to an innovative model for teledentistry, and we provided direct funding for leadership development for dental safety-net providers and administrators. Our Director also led 40+ presentations across the state.

### Lessons Learned:

The most important lesson learned has been the significance of collaboration and partnership in pursuing our mission and policy objectives. Our success addressing oral health care disparities and increasing access and equity is primarily the result of facilitating connection and collaboration between both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders. There are many organizations and individuals with similar objectives throughout North Carolina, however prior to NCOHC efforts, little had been done to connect these entities and encourage their collaboration.

One thing we would have done differently is try to establish relationships with key legislators, policymakers and influencers earlier in the process. While NCOHC has consistently engaged with the public and community partners, it was only after taking concrete steps under Dr. Brian's leadership to engage these influential individuals and organizations that we were able to make significant strides in implementing our desired policy outcomes.

---

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

Zachary Brian, DMD, MHA, Director, North Carolina Oral Health Collaborative (a program of the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation), 2401 Weston Parkway, Suite 203, Cary, North Carolina 27513, Phone: 231-340-1709, office: 919-589-7524, Email: [zachary.brian@foundationhli.org](mailto:zachary.brian@foundationhli.org)

Anne Thomas, BSN, MPA, CEO & President, Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation, 2401 Weston Parkway, Suite 203, Cary, North Carolina 27513, Phone: 919-821-0485, Email: [anne.thomas@foundationhli.org](mailto:anne.thomas@foundationhli.org)