

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH)

In 2013, a small group of oral health advocates including community health professionals, dental providers, and community foundations formally organized the PA Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH). Today, PCOH is a statewide leader in oral health advocacy, working with more than 100 organizations and over 700 stakeholders to shape policy and educate the public about the importance of lifelong dental health.

PCOH is funded through government and non-government grants, private and corporate donations, with a total budget of more than \$700,000 and an operating budget of around \$275,000.

In order to allow all interested organizations and individuals to participate, the coalition convenes in-person stakeholder meetings across the state and hosts virtual meetings. There is no fee to participate in stakeholder meetings nor to receive PCOH's weekly newsletter.

Stakeholder convenings are interactive events. PCOH shares updates on successes and challenges within PCOH's priority areas; coalition partners contribute their collective knowledge and resources. Small working groups move specific objectives forward throughout the year.

Priority areas for 2019 are:

- Supporting Pennsylvania Oral Health Workforce Development
- Improving Oral Health for Pennsylvania's Most Vulnerable Populations
- Advancing and Advocating for Oral Health Policy and Infrastructure Across All Systems
- Advocating for Community Water Fluoridation

Our priority areas are intentionally broad and far-reaching, allowing stakeholders to work on a variety of topics within the broad goals and respond to what the legislative session holds. The priorities are written to be as inclusive of our valued partners as possible. For some priorities, it is appropriate for PCOH to lead the advocacy effort. For others, PCOH takes a partnership position, working closely with another lead organization. Bringing leading organizations in Pennsylvania into one collaborative group has unified statewide oral health efforts at the community, clinical and policy levels and made progress that would not have been possible without the collective.

Lessons Learned:

- The statewide support of many diverse organizations was instrumental in building our coalition. We were able to work with partners in state-level organizations, like the American Academy of Pediatrics, PA Head Start Association, and the PA Association of Community Health Centers, to develop programs to fit their individual audiences, but with a focus on oral health messaging.
- Our work and communication with other state coalitions was also extremely helpful. Much of the groundwork has been laid in other states and many projects and initiatives that are working in other states can be revised and implemented in Pennsylvania.
- Since a large portion of our initial funding was provided by a single foundation with a finite end to funding, PCOH began diversifying our funds in 2015. For our organization that focuses only on oral health, this was an easier process. For our partners who have nested oral health programming inside larger organizations, it has proven more difficult to diversify these funds.

Other organizations are less likely to prioritize oral health. In order to continue these important partnerships, PCOH finds itself seeking funding to assist others in addition to our own organization.

- Another challenge that was encountered was the rapid growth of the coalition. From a staffing standpoint, it continues to be difficult to manage communication with more than 100 organizations and 700 stakeholders with just a few staff. It is important to have continued communication across the state and we rely on our stakeholders to keep us apprised.

Contact Person(s) for Inquiries:

Helen Hawkey, Executive Director, PA Coalition for Oral Health, P.O. Box 242, Delmont, PA 15626, Phone: 724-972-7242, Email: helen@paoralhealth.org

Merrilynn Marsh, Development Director, PA Coalition for Oral Health, P.O. Box 242, Delmont, PA 15626, Email: merrilynn@paoralhealth.org