



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### Washington State Oral Health Coalition

Washington State Oral Health Coalition (WSOHC) is a broad-based group of organizations and individuals whose mission is to promote optimal oral health for all Washington State residents. The Coalition consists of more than 40 organizations representing public and private dental and health professionals, local, state and federal health agencies, social services, insurers, and education. The Coalition is a collaborative for improving oral health education and access to oral health care. WSOHC meets monthly and each year the meetings are held in at least four regions of the state. Teleconferencing is available at each meeting to enable expanded member involvement. WSOHC sponsors an annual conference for oral health advocates from around the state to share best practices in oral health at the local and state levels. Since the Coalition's inception in 1993, it has focused on educating decision makers at the legislative and state agency levels about the importance of oral health and strategies to decrease dental disease. The Coalition is led and run by volunteers and operates on a minimal budget to support the annual conference. In 2001, WSOHC obtained 501(c)(3) status to enable the coalition to fundraise and expand activities. Washington Dental Service Foundation provides in-kind support; the Washington State Department of Health and other member organizations have also contributed significantly to the Coalition's operations over the years. Achievements from the Coalition's efforts include: (1) \$42 million to increase Medicaid dental benefits for children in 1995, (2) tools and support systems developed for local communities including an email listserv to link oral health advocates across Washington and providing updates on programs and research locally and across the nation, (3) a manual developed as a resource called *Community Roots for Oral Health: Guidelines for Coalition Building*, and (4) oral health components added to the Recommended Children's Preventive Services by the State Board of Health in 2000.

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