



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Washington State Oral Health Summit

The Washington State Oral Health Coalition convened the first-ever Washington State Oral Health Summit on October 4, 2002. The purpose of the Summit was to increase the visibility of oral health issues among policymakers and to influence policy that is supportive of oral health improvement. The summit supported the charges of *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General* with focus areas of continuing to strengthen connections in oral health and overall health systems, bridging education and oral health, expanding the workforce which provides dental services, and decreasing barriers to Medicaid services. Seventy-nine (79) participants attended the summit and the audience was made up of legislators; medical, dental and education leaders from associations, organizations, state and federal agencies, and foundations. The morning session of the summit presented information on the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, shared a vision to improve oral health, and provided panel presentation/discussion on integrating oral health, bridging oral health education and increasing access to care. A legislative panel provided presentations by several state senators and representatives. The afternoon portion of the summit was devoted to workgroups. The workgroup breakout sessions provided summit attendees choices to focus on (1) linking oral health and overall health, (2) bridging oral health and education, (3) increasing access to care for Medicaid clients, and (4) expanding the workforce for providing dental services. The workgroups identified current efforts, opportunities, challenges, and potential solutions. Each workgroup presented their strategies to all summit participants. The summit report summarized the ideas generated from the breakout sessions (<http://www.astdd.org/summitreports/Washington.pdf>). A clear message from the summit's legislative panelists was that it is imperative for individuals and organizations to "do their homework" on issues surrounding any policy, and to speak with one voice. The Washington State Oral Health Coalition will endeavor to promote this cooperative effort in order to improve oral health in Washington State. Since 2002, educational efforts have been directed toward collaboration with medical providers through cross-program education at the University of Washington Medical and Dental Schools, training and services through local health jurisdictions, funding and training for medical providers through the Medical Assistance Administration, and training and promotion from Washington Dental Service Foundation.

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