



Dental Public Health State Activity Submission Form

ASTDD’s goal in collecting information about successful state Dental Public Health activities (e.g., practice, program, service, event, or policy) is to share this information with other states, territories, and stakeholders who may be interested in implementing similar activities. We thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences.

Please complete the form below and return to Lori Cofano, ASTDD Best Practices Project Coordinator, at lcofano@astdd.org

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STATE DENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIVITY (e.g., practice, program, service, event, or policy) Minimum=300 Maximum=500	
Activity title:	Organizational use of teledentistry to enable health equity and prevention
State/Territory:	MA
Summary overview, which may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives Rationale Personnel Key partners Costs & sustainability 	

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health is a nonprofit committed to improving the oral health of all. Its for-profit affiliate, CareQuest Innovation Partners, shares the same mission. Both organizations aim to transform the oral health care system and envision expanding the use of technology, namely teledentistry, as a fundamental component. These organizations pursued two primary objectives: 1) Promote teledentistry as a tool to enable health equity, prioritizing the underserved, increasing their access to care, and 2) Endorse and grow teledentistry as a vital tool for education and preventive care.

CareQuest Institute and CareQuest Innovation Partners worked toward meeting these objectives through three areas of activation:

1. CareQuest Institute has been leading health improvement program known as the Community Oral Health Transformation (COrHT) Initiative that enables dental providers to deliver integrated and value-based care, including virtual care that applies technology for enhanced disease prevention and whole-person health. To date, CareQuest Institute has funded two iterations of a learning community at approximately \$350,000 over the last two years. Funding advanced not only use of teledentistry, but also minimally invasive care and medical-dental integration. Outcomes from this program have included increased utilization of teledentistry for emergent and preventive care.
2. CareQuest Institute implements its grant making through a systems-change approach and supports teledentistry initiatives focused on building, piloting, and sharing new models that better serve historically marginalized populations. Funding for a few key teledentistry initiatives has reached more than \$1 million and outcomes include sustained implementation of private practitioners in community-based and rural settings, strategic delivery of care to patients with special health care needs, and delivery of preventive care and education through teledentistry.
3. CareQuest Innovation Partners collaborated with Advantage Dental, DentaQuest's care deliver team in Oregon to rollout a synchronous emergency access program to their oral health centers using MouthWatch TeleDent in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for the initiative came from Advantage Dental, and the program showed evidence of teledentistry increasing access to care, and being effectively used for risk identification, management, and triage, while driving system wide cost savings when deployed in a value-based care system.

Lessons learned from all three areas of activation follow similar patterns including the need for provider and patient buy-in, comprehensive workforce empowerment to use teledentistry, and viable teledentistry reimbursement avenues.

Lessons learned from all three efforts follow similar patterns including the need for provider and patient buy-in, comprehensive workforce empowerment to use teledentistry and viable teledentistry reimbursement avenues. The teledentistry environment is different in every state, but considerations remain the same. When working with dental providers, it is important they understand how to use teledentistry technology, create efficient workflows, and partner with patients to meet their needs using the modality. To enable the use of teledentistry for accessible preventive care, it is critical that allied dental professionals are supported by their practice act and fellow-dental practitioners to use teledentistry. Reimbursement for a variety of teledentistry services must be supported by state Medicaid and commercial payors to gain provider buy-in and use of the modality. The majority of states CareQuest Institute worked with on teledentistry initiatives had limited reimbursement for emergency services using teledentistry but going forward, it will be important that reimbursement for prevention, education, and integration are prioritized to enhance teledentistry as a tool to promote health equity. Additional learning is critical when it comes to implementation for historically underserved communities such as rural populations or patients with special health care needs. Expanding implementation into both public and private sectors likely will mean one size does not, or cannot, fit all and consumer or community engagement must be a fundamental part of any approach.

When implementing the COrHT Initiative, the main challenges to teledentistry implementation were policy restrictions. Working in three different states, CareQuest Institute encountered barriers in the form of limited reimbursement (especially for preventive services) and workforce that could use teledentistry, need for a teledentistry permit and lack of provider buy-in due to the other challenges. To overcome these, the CareQuest Institute leaned on partnerships. We created a learning community space where health centers could discuss challenges and identify solutions together. Additionally, we worked with the states' Primary Care Associations to raise awareness of teledentistry needs and for coalition building.

In addition to challenges related to the policy and regulatory environment, across the country there is a varying number of resources, intent, and comfort when it comes to more deeply engaging consumers and/or community members in the

design or delivery of new teledentistry strategies. This is especially true when seeking to engage historically marginalized communities who suffer from a myriad of inequities and are likely balancing their own immediate needs. There are opportunities to build and spread new approaches to community and consumer engagement that have the potential to enhance utilization, increase provider and patient buy in, and bolster impact.

CareQuest Innovation Partners faced similar challenges including regulation on teledentistry, reimbursement for preventive services, provider adoption, understanding use cases, and sharing best practices. One unique challenge to the Innovation initiative was that the rollout of teledentistry happened under a value-based model of care and payment. Advantage Dental is a dental accountable care organization that reimburses through a capitated system. Teledentistry use was figured into this existing payment model. The ongoing challenge lies in the ability to generalize this VBC-focused teledentistry initiative to the larger existing fee-for-service system seen nationally.

TO BE COMPLETED BY ASTDD	
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