



# Public Health Law

Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## ***Healthy People 2020* Law and Health Policy Project: Legal and Policy Resources Related to Oral Health**

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Practicing good oral health includes more than caring for teeth; it encompasses “being free of chronic oral-facial pain conditions, oral and pharyngeal (throat) cancers, ... and scores of other diseases and disorders that affect the oral, dental, and craniofacial tissues, collectively known as the craniofacial complex.”<sup>1</sup> Because oral health plays such an important part in general health care, it “must be included in the provision of health care and the design of community programs.”<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, *Healthy People 2020 (HP2020)* has chosen 17 objectives to improve the state of the nation’s oral health, ranging from reducing the proportion of children and adolescents with untreated dental decay<sup>3</sup> to increasing health agencies that have a dental public health program directed by a dental professional with public health training.<sup>4</sup> This document has been developed for persons interested in oral health and related topics. It lists selected legal and policy resources related to increasing access to oral health systems; oral health and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs); and children and oral health.

### **Increasing Access to Oral Health Systems**

Good oral health is a vital component to an individual’s overall health, but many Americans “lack access to basic, affordable oral healthcare.” The following resources address access to oral health systems.

- US DEP’T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS., HEALTH RESOURCES & SERVS. ADMIN., BUREAU OF HEALTH WORKFORCE, NAT’L CTR. FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE ANALYSIS, [National and State-Level Projections of Dentists and Dental Hygienists in the U.S., 2012–2025](#) (Feb. 2015).
- AM. DENTAL HYGIENISTS’ ASS’N., [Direct Medicaid Reimbursement 2015](#) (Oct. 2014).
- THE NETWORK FOR PUB. HEALTH LAW, [Policy Options to Increase Access to Oral Health Care and Improve Oral Health by Expanding the Oral Health Workforce](#) (Oct. 2014).



- W.K. KELLOGG FOUND., [Mid-Level Dental Providers: Expanding Care to Every Community](#) (Oct. 2014).
- MINNESOTA DEP'T. OF HEALTH, MINNESOTA BD. OF DENTISTRY, [Early Impacts of Dental Therapists in Minnesota](#) (Feb. 2014).
- AM. DENTAL HYGIENISTS' ASS'N., [Dental Hygiene Practice Act Overview: Permitted Functions and Supervision Levels by State](#) (updated September 2015).
- Megan Comlossy, Nat'l Conference of State Legislatures, [Oral Health Overview: Health Care Safety-Net Toolkit for Legislators](#) (2013).
- ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUND., [New Reports Highlight Oral Health Innovations, Preventive Care Models](#) (Sept. 2013).
- AM. DENTAL ASS'N., [Breaking Down Barriers to Oral Health for All Americans: The Community Dental Health Coordinator](#) (Oct. 2012).
- THE NETWORK FOR PUB. HEALTH LAW, [Improving Oral Health Care: ACA Initiatives and IOM Recommendations](#) (updated June 2012).

## Oral Health and FQHCs

FQHCs are community health centers that provide health care to underserved populations. As the following resources describe, FQHCs may offer oral health services, providing much-needed care to vulnerable populations.<sup>5</sup>

- Mary E. Foley, [Understanding the FQHC Perspective Payment System](#) (Apr. 2013).
- Emily Jones, Leiyu Shi, Arthur Seiji Hayashi et al., [Access to Oral Health Care: The Role of Federally Qualified Health Centers in Addressing Disparities and Expanding Access](#). AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (Jan. 2013).
- CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH PROJECT, [Increasing Access to Dental Care through Public Private Partnerships: Contracting Between Private Dentists and Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) (Mar. 2011).

## Improving Oral Health of Children and Adolescents in the United States

Dental decay is one of the leading chronic conditions among children.<sup>6</sup> Receiving preventive dental services, such as dental sealants on molar teeth, decreases the risk for untreated dental decay.<sup>7</sup> The resources below focus on approaches to improve children and adolescent oral health.

- [CMTY. PREVENTIVE SERVS. TASK FORCE, Preventing Dental Caries: School-Based Dental Sealant Delivery Programs \(updated Nov. 6, 2015\).](#)
- CHILDREN'S DENTAL POL'Y PROJECT, THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, [Pew Study Shows Little Progress on Proven Oral Health Strategy](#) (Apr. 2015).

- THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, [HHS Fluoride Announcement Demonstrates Commitment to Dental Health](#) (Apr. 2015).
- ASS'N OF STATE & TERRITORIAL DENTAL DIRS., [Best Practice Approaches for State and Community Oral Health Programs](#) (updated Mar. 2015).
- NAT'L CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES, [Children's Oral Health Policy Issues Overview](#) (Jan. 2015).
- Roger Chou, Amy Cantor, Bernadette Zakher et al., [Prevention of Dental Caries in Children Younger Than 5 Years Old: Systematic Review to Update the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation](#) (May 2014).
- David O. Quissell, Lucinda L. Bryant, Patricia A. Braun et al., [Preventing Caries in Preschoolers: Successful Initiation of an Innovative Community-Based Clinical Trial in Navajo Nation Head Start](#). CONTEMPORARY CLINICAL TRIALS (Mar. 2014).
- AM. ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, AM. PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION & NAT'L RES. CTR. FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY IN CHILD CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION, [Oral Health in Child Care and Early Education](#) (3rd ed. 2013).
- Jolene Bertness & Katrina Holt eds., Nat'l Maternal and Child Oral Health Res. Ctr., [Promoting Oral Health in Schools: A Resource Guide](#) (2nd ed. 2013).
- COMM. ON ORAL HEALTH ACCESS TO SERVS., INST. OF MEDICINE & NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, [Improving Access to Oral Health Care for Vulnerable and Underserved Populations](#) (2011).
- Katrina Holt & Ruth Barzel, Nat'l Maternal and Child Oral Health Res. Ctr., [Comprehensive Oral Health Services for Improving Children's and Adolescents' Oral Health through School-Based Health Centers](#) (2011).
- INDIAN HEALTH SERV., [The 2010 Indian Health Service Oral Health Survey of American Indian and Alaska Native Preschool Children](#) (2010).

## Acknowledgments and Disclaimers

This document was developed by Julia Charles, JD, Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education Fellow with the Public Health Law Program (PHLP) within CDC's Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support.

For further technical assistance with this inventory, please contact [phlawprogram@cdc.gov](mailto:phlawprogram@cdc.gov). PHLP provides technical assistance and public health law resources to advance the use of law as a public health tool. PHLP cannot provide legal advice on any issue and cannot represent any individual or entity in any matter. PHLP recommends seeking the advice of an attorney or other qualified professional with questions regarding the application of law to a specific circumstance. The findings and conclusions in this summary are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC.

For further technical assistance with this inventory and for questions regarding the *HP2020* Law and Health Policy Project, please contact Angela McGowan at [angela.mcgowan@hhs.gov](mailto:angela.mcgowan@hhs.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> US DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS., PUBLIC HEALTH SERV., OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL. [Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). (2000).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *HP2020* Oral Health Objective #2.

<sup>4</sup> *HP2020* Oral Health Objective #17.

<sup>5</sup> *HP2020* Oral Health Objective #11 is increasing the proportion of patients who receive oral health services at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) each year.

<sup>6</sup> CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, [Children's Oral Health](#). (updated Nov. 10, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> See *HP2020* Oral Health Objectives #2 (reduce the proportion of children and adolescents with untreated dental decay), #8 (increase the proportion of low-income children and adolescents who received any preventive dental service during the past year), #12 (increase the proportion of children and adolescents who have received dental sealants on their molar teeth), and #9 (increase the proportion of school-based health centers with an oral health component).