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

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.”¹ 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.”²

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 decay³ to increasing health agencies that have a dental public health program directed by a dental professional with public health training.⁴ 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.


- AM. Dental Hygienists’ Ass’n., *Dental Hygiene Practice Act Overview: Permitted Functions and Supervision Levels by State* (updated September 2015).

**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.


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

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

- Community Preventive Servs. Task Force, *Preventing Dental Caries: School-Based Dental Sealant Delivery Programs* (updated Nov. 6, 2015).
- THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, HHS Fluoride Announcement Demonstrates Commitment to Dental Health (Apr. 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).


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. 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.
Published May 19, 2016.

2 Id.
3 HP2020 Oral Health Objective #2.
4 HP2020 Oral Health Objective #17.
5 HP2020 Oral Health Objective #11 is increasing the proportion of patients who receive oral health services at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) each year.
7 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).