

Building the Illinois Oral Health Plan

This first Oral Health Plan was developed with the input of citizens, stakeholders and policy makers in Illinois and reflects the collaborative and collective wisdom of many. The plan represents a comprehensive vision and has been embraced by stakeholders involved in the process, particularly because it incorporates the results of already existing local and statewide efforts to improve oral health that has already been described. In addition, guidance, lessons and results from the following initiatives have been incorporated in the Illinois Oral Health Plan.

Statewide Steering Committee

In August 2000, the National Governor's Association (NGA) announced that it would convene a policy academy on oral health. The academy would provide technical assistants to states in developing strategies in order to eliminate oral health disparities. Interested states were asked to submit an application that included a description of a state team that would participate in the academy. It was to include representatives from the Governor's office, the state health agency, the state Medicaid agency, the state dental association, the legislature, the primary care association, the business community and the not-for-profit sector.

Despite the fact that Illinois was not selected by the Governor's association to participate in the Academy, the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Oral Health assumed a leadership role and convened this same group of individuals to serve as the nucleus for a steering committee. The committee was charged with the responsibility of developing an oral health plan for Illinois and convening an Oral Health Summit in order to garner support and assess public reaction to the plan.

The committee structured the Summit as an Illinois response to the U.S. Surgeon General's call to action. The summit would provide information to policy makers and resource holders on existing efforts in Illinois to improve oral health. It would also provide an opportunity to share the draft oral health plan as yet another element of Illinois' response to the national call to action. To meet this charge, the Steering Committee developed the Summit agenda, recommended speakers and coordinated the invitation process for the Summit.

The Steering Committee reviewed the strategy suggestions and findings from efforts and research on oral health conducted in Illinois. Based on this information, it proposed a draft list of oral health priorities for the state, to be further developed by the Division of Oral Health. The group worked collaboratively and intensively to gather input, organize the Illinois Oral Health Summit and follow up from this event with all attendees. The steering committee has continued to function as a group of interested and partnering organizations to finalize the development of the Illinois Oral Health Plan, and to begin planning for implementation of strategies to meet its goals and recommendations.

Community Meetings

The IFLOSS Coalition recommended to IDPH and the Steering committee that input to the oral health plan is gathered through a series of community meetings. (See map 7, on page 20) These meetings have several objectives:

- Listen to community perspectives on local oral health issues and priorities.
- React to the draft proposed set of oral health priorities identified by the Summit Steering Committee.
- Ask for community input and advice as to how to address oral health priorities in Illinois.

Town hall forums were held across Illinois in June and July 2001 for this purpose. More than 300 residents from across the state participated in meetings held in Mt. Vernon, Chicago, Bloomington, Aurora, Rock Island, Champaign, and Alton.

Conveners of the community meetings included the IFLOSS Coalition in collaboration with local county and city health departments, the Campaign for Better Health Care, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Maternal and Child Health Coalition, the University of Illinois, Chicago School of Public Health, and Southern Illinois University. Conveners were charged to work with colleagues and inform communities about the town hall sessions, to alert the local media and recruit participants. Each Steering Committee member also worked with networks of their members and colleagues state wide to inform and invite members to the town hall meetings. In follow up to the community sessions conveners have worked to distribute the comments and suggestions from their community back to individuals and groups that attended the town hall sessions.

The themes and advice offered throughout this process have been incorporated into the Illinois Oral Health Plan. A summary of findings from the community meetings and a statewide summary were included in the materials distributed at the Illinois Oral Health Summit. The summary is available from the Department of Health, Division of Oral Health.

Community Oral Health Infrastructure Development Project

The Illinois Community Oral Health Infrastructure Development Plan specifies the educational programs, community practice experience and data, surveillance and research required in Illinois to assure adequate dental public health infrastructure and capacity for the elimination of oral health disparities. A comprehensive set of objectives, strategies/action steps and the identification of implementation elements including due date, resources needed and responsible party, support each of the identified priorities.

Planning for the development of a community oral health infrastructure began early in 1999. In August of 1999 under the direction of the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Oral Health a diverse group of key stakeholders were invited to discuss the need for development of an infrastructure to assure an adequate supply of community oral health professionals in Illinois. Those in attendance included Deans and faculty of Dentistry and Public Health schools, the President of the Illinois State Dental Society, representative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration (Administrator, Bureau of Health Professions; Midwest Field Office Director, Regional Dental Consultant), and other key stakeholders in the dental public.

Each participant agreed that their individual organization held a vital piece of a puzzle that, when put together in a systematic fashion, could lead to a sustainable and integrated system for the prevention and control of oral disease in Illinois. In both the private and public sectors, stakeholders perceived that partnering across local, state, and federal agencies with non-governmental groups a difference could be made in assuring adequate access to dental services and oral health programs, increasing the number of community oral health oriented oral health personnel and reducing the disparities and services and disease across population groups. (See map 8, page 22) A project was proposed to HRSA and in September 2000 the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health, Health Research and Policy Centers was awarded a contract, "Illinois Initiative for Dental Public/Community Oral Health Infrastructure Development Project." The purpose of the project was to develop a blueprint for establishing a sustainable community oral infrastructure in Illinois.

There were a number of major activities in this one-year intensive effort. They included a statewide consensus conference, sustained work group efforts in education, research and surveillance and community-based practice and the development of priorities and actions for community oral health infrastructure development.

Specifically, a plan to meet the needs of the dental and dental hygiene educational institutions as well as those of communities was drafted and submitted to HRSA in 2001. Major priority areas addressed in that project include community oral health professional education, training and practice opportunities, the development of an oral health surveillance system for the state of Illinois, and community-based practice, prevention and control programs for the reduction of oral health disparities. Over 50 individual and organizations attended meetings to develop a specific set of plans with action steps and timelines over the course of the grant. The final product of this collective effort is included in the Appendix to this publication. The infrastructure plan serves as the foundation upon which the Illinois Oral Health Plan has been built.

Illinois Oral Health Summit and Post-Summit Activities

The Illinois Oral Health summit was held on September 11, 2001, in an effort to present the Illinois Oral Health Plan to key policymakers in Illinois. The purpose of the Summit was to provide a forum for policymakers and key stakeholders in Illinois to learn about key issues in oral health from a variety of perspectives and, in light of that knowledge, to react to a draft of the Illinois Oral Health Plan. One hundred individuals representing the Governor's office, the legislature, the philanthropic community, the business community, the health care community, state agency directors and oral health leaders came together to react to the plan. Welcoming comments and several key presentations on the Summit agenda were completed before an unanticipated adjournment at 10:15 AM CST due to the tragic national events of that now-historic date.

In light of those events, the strategic approach to developing the plan was modified. Participants were asked to review the materials that were to have been presented at the Summit. Written comments were received from 25 individuals and organizations. These were compiled and organized by the Division of Oral Health and reviewed by the Steering Committee. The plan was modified and on January 22, 2002, was adopted by the Committee. The final State Oral Health Plan is on file with the Division of Oral Health, Illinois Department of Public Health.

Illinois Oral Health Plan Components

The following components comprise the Illinois Oral Health Plan:

- Five policy goals that reflect the framework for action suggested by the Surgeon General's *Report on Oral Health in America*
- Illinois-specific priorities for each goal area, identified through the multiple processes and input across the state of Illinois
- Recommendations and suggested strategies to meet the priorities identified. These ideas were also drawn from the many new efforts in Illinois to assess and improve oral health.

An Appendix to the Plan includes:

- The Community Oral Health Infrastructure Development Plan
- Healthy People 2010 Objectives for the National Oral Health Plan for each Illinois-specific policy goal
- A list of Steering Committee, Summit, infrastructure development, Town Hall Meeting and oral health needs assessment participants