



# Helping Maryland Smile

Office of Oral Health  
Family Health Administration  
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



**HISTORY** In 1996, Senate Bill 590 established the Office of Oral Health within the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The Office of Oral Health was placed in statute in Senate Bill 590 during the 1998 Maryland General Assembly legislative session. Based on this legislation, the Office of Oral Health is charged with developing statewide oral health preventive and educational strategies, conducting oral health surveys of the State's schoolchildren, facilitating the Oral Health Advisory Committee, and providing grant monies for the establishment of oral health programs targeted to populations at high risk for oral disease.

**MISSION** The mission of the Office of Oral Health (OOH) is to improve the oral health status of Maryland residents through a variety of public oral health initiatives and interventions, characterized by a focus on health promotion and disease prevention. OOH develops, promotes, and advocates statewide cost-effective preventive and educational activities and policies that demonstrate and define the role of oral health as part of overall systemic health and quality of life. The OOH partners with other State agencies, local health departments, schools, community agencies, and private providers in developing policies, programs, and activities which address the following five major areas:

- ◆ *Oral Disease Prevention:* Develop and support scientifically proven oral health interventions and policies which prevent oral diseases, including promotion of community water fluoridation, use of dental sealants, systemic and topical fluoride use, tobacco prevention, health education, and instruction in oral hygiene and proper dietary choices.
- ◆ *Current & Unmet Oral Disease Status:* Improve the current status of unmet and untreated oral diseases in Maryland populations including early childhood caries, adult and child dental caries, and periodontal diseases.
- ◆ *Oral Injuries:* Reduce the number of oral injuries and sports related oral injuries that occur in Maryland schoolchildren each year.
- ◆ *Oral Cancer:* Reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with oral cancer in Maryland residents.
- ◆ *Special Population Groups:* Improve access to oral health care treatment, preventive and educational services and resources for underserved and uninsured Maryland populations.



## **MARYLAND DENT-CARE LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM**

In 2000, the Maryland General Assembly created a new loan repayment program for dentists entitled the Maryland Dent-Care Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MDC-LARP). The purpose of the MDC-LARP is to increase the number of dentists providing oral health services to Maryland Medical Assistance Program (MMAP) recipients. Each year five Maryland dentists are selected to participate in the program for a period of three years (for a total of 15 dentists in the program at any one time). The dentists selected to the program receive \$99,000 in educational loan repayment over the three-year period. In return for the loan repayment, dentists commit to provide at least 30 percent of their total patient services to the MMAP recipient population per year. MDC-LARP dentists practice statewide and provide comprehensive oral health services to MMAP recipients.

OOH in partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission administers this program. OOH monitors participants on a monthly basis to ensure compliance with program goals, collects all applications, convenes the review panel, promotes the program, gathers feedback from award recipients, conducts initial and yearly site visits, and provides an orientation for new program participants.

## **DENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS**

Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) are federally designated areas that have shortages of dentists and may be urban or rural areas, population groups or medical or other public facilities. The primary intent of the Dental HPSA designation is to encourage the placement of dentists in areas that lack sufficient dental personnel. A Dental HPSA can be a distinct geographic area (such as a county), a specific population group within the area (such as the low-income), or a specific public or nonprofit facility (such as a prison).

The Office of Oral Health partners with the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health in designating regions of the state that have a shortage of dental providers as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA). The OOH continues to add to this list and applies for re-designation of these areas every three years.



Healthy Smiles



## MARYLAND ORAL CANCER PREVENTION AND EDUCATION INITIATIVE

This multi-faceted program established in 2001 incorporates the following: a) training programs for health care providers to screen and refer patients with oral cancers; b) public education programs about oral cancer prevention and the need to receive an oral cancer examination; and c) promotion of smoking cessation programs.

### Oral Cancer Burden in Maryland

- ◆ Maryland ranks eighth in the nation for deaths from oral cancer.
- ◆ African American males in Maryland have the sixth highest death rate in the nation from oral cancer.
- ◆ According to the 2002 Survey of Maryland Adult's Knowledge of Oral Cancer:
  - 42% of Maryland adults surveyed reported ever having had an oral cancer exam;
  - 73% of Maryland adults surveyed had never heard of a test or exam for oral cancer;
  - 77% of Maryland adults surveyed who had ever had an oral cancer exam, had their oral cancer exam performed by a dentist.

### Reduce Oral Cancer Mortality Grants

The Oral Cancer Prevention and Education Initiative is implemented by local health departments with funding from OOH. OOH provides technical assistance and guidance to the counties and identifies best practices that have the potential to be replicated statewide.

### Statewide Public Relations Campaign

- ◆ Oral Cancer Awareness Week -- (June) During this week OOH sponsors public service announcements and provides support to local health departments in promoting the importance of adults having an annual oral cancer exam.
- ◆ Maryland Oral Cancer Website ([www.maryland-oralcancer.org](http://www.maryland-oralcancer.org)) -- The oral cancer website provides information for healthcare providers and the public.



## ORAL HEALTH AND CHILD HEALTH

Oral health is an integral component of overall health. The medical consequences of poor oral health include infection, pain, and impaired eating ability that lead to poor nutritional status. In addition to these physical affects, poor oral health can lead to speech difficulties, unpleasant appearance affecting self-esteem, and an inability to concentrate due to pain. For children this pain negatively impacts their readiness to learn and productivity in school.

### Child Oral Health Status in Maryland

#### ◆ Highlights of the 2000 - 2001 Survey of the Oral Health Status of Maryland School

Children showed:

- 42% of all children (K, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> grade) had untreated decay;
- 53% of children in Kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade had untreated decay in their primary teeth;
- The Eastern Shore had the highest percentage of untreated dental decay (54%) followed by the Central Baltimore region (48%).

### Head Start, WIC and Oral Health

In an effort to integrate oral health messages into existing programs the Office partners with Maryland State Head Start, Office of the Maryland WIC Program and local oral health programs. A series of four lesson plans for Head Start and WIC instructors are available to educate children and their parents/caregivers about the importance of oral health.

## ORAL INJURY PREVENTION

Since 1996, OOH has awarded competitive grants to local health departments to develop community based and school based preventive, treatment and education and outreach programs for oral health.

- ◆ **Clinic Visits:** Local health departments that provide comprehensive dental care are often one of the few providers of Medicaid dental services in their county and typically treat children. Two counties have instituted adult dental programs by working with private dentists in their counties to establish reduced fees.
- ◆ **Sealants:** Approximately 3,500 children each year receive pit-and-fissure sealants through school based sealant programs organized and implemented by local health departments. The majority of school sealant programs target second graders since the first permanent molars appear around the age of six.
- ◆ **Fluoride Rinse/Tablets:** Local health departments partner with schools and community programs to implement fluoride rinse and tablet programs to school aged children.
- ◆ **Community Education:** More than 9,500 children each year receive oral health education through local health departments. In addition, local health department dental staff educate WIC clients and staff, Head Start children, migrant communities and interact with other local parent organizations to promote good oral health.



## COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION

Research has repeatedly shown fluoridation of public water supplies is one of the safest and most effective ways to reduce the incidence of dental decay for all community residents. The Office of Oral Health works in partnership with local communities to promote community water fluoridation. Since 1996, ten communities have received community water fluoridation grants. Currently, more than 92% of community water systems in Maryland are fluoridated exceeding the Healthy People 2010 objective of 75%.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Office of Oral Health partners with a variety of State and local agencies and local coalitions to improve oral health. The following listing is just some of the organizations the OOH partners with:

Eastern Shore Oral Cancer Coalition  
Governor's Office of Children, Youth and Families  
Maryland Association of County and City Dental Public Health Officials  
Maryland Academy of General Dentistry  
Maryland Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
Maryland Board of Dental Examiners  
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition  
Maryland Center for Cancer Surveillance  
Maryland Center for Maternal and Child Health  
Maryland Dental Society  
Maryland Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped  
Maryland State Department of Education  
Maryland Department of the Environment  
Maryland Head Start  
Maryland Higher Education Commission  
Maryland Medical Assistance Programs  
Maryland State Dental Association  
Mid Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. (Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness) Coalition  
Office of Primary Care and Rural Health  
Office of the Maryland WIC Program  
Oral Health Advisory Committee  
University of Maryland Baltimore College of Dental Surgery

## **OFFICE OF ORAL HEALTH**

Family Health Administration  
Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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