

Action Steps Identified During July 29, 2020 Pandemic Response Workgroup Call

What actions can we take now, in the middle of the pandemic, to begin to address the disparities in the oral health care system?

Research and Data

- Research on the impact of COVID on underserved communities and communities of color and
- COVID data broken out for communities with high African American populations.
- Research and data on the impact of COVID on communities with rural health clinics or no clinics. Have they seen a decrease in visits? What has been the impact on underserved communities?
- We talked about the need for data and research and understanding, but also not viewing all these groups as monolithic. There are specific communities that have different realities and experiences that could be represented in the data that is collected.
- What are the racial and ethnic implications of the disparities we see? On top of the initial disparities and barriers to access, COVID has demonstrated some more areas we need more data on. What are the new barriers to care that COVID has created?

Medical-Dental Integration / Inter-professional Care

- Integrating oral health with primary care is so important at this time. What ways are there to incentivize this now, during COVID, so that oral health questions and referrals happen during wellness visits?
- As we determine the strategies to come up with the messages and the delivery of the messages, there must be an inter-professional approach to developing the strategies and to address anxieties that are in communities of color. Need to be working more with psychologists and social workers, and dentists have a role in being more empathetic to the struggles.

Telehealth

- Another point is using telehealth visits for the promotion of oral health.

Funding Challenges

- We were commiserating over the funding for benefits, and for the challenge at the state level for Medicaid benefits and reimbursements. We need to protect the progress we've made.

Continuing Education

- We talked about the importance of education and educating in the schools, looking at dental students as well as the current oral health practitioners. Are there ways to

encourage state dental boards to accept CEs from public health seminars and courses? We'd like to see all practitioners be eligible to take public health CEs. Also the importance of understanding equity; we want to see if there are public health CEs that really delve into that topic.

Organizational Change

- The Santa Fe group is attempting to diversify their membership, and there is a new mentorship program. As well as making the table more inclusive for an inter-professional conference coming up in 2021.
- The ADA had one of their first town hall meetings focused on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and there is a work group to focus on staff and DEI.
- At the ADA council level they are working on diversifying the membership and being inclusive of different perspectives.
- We talked about potentially reconvening the National Oral Health Alliance, and that the Access to Care Summit can be inclusive and diverse in the planning.
- The landscape is about how to make the table more diverse and inclusive, and make sure the upcoming events reflect that as well.
- We also talked about working with dental schools to promote diversity and inclusion among them, changing the perception at the educational level.

Public Health Infrastructure

- We talked about improving public health infrastructure; increasing awareness of opportunities in community health centers; increasing awareness of funding opportunities for health clinics and looking at funding structures; and addressing any education gaps in public health.

Improving Oral Health Coverage in Public Insurance Programs

- We talked about he increasing advocacy efforts around looking at Medicare and Medicaid benefits.