

Coalition of Leading Health and Oral Health Organizations Call on Biden Administration, Governors to Authorize Oral Health Providers to Administer COVID-19 Vaccine

420,000 oral health professionals are uniquely situated to ensure underserved communities can access the vaccine

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Boston, MA [March 10, 2021] – Today, 17 leading health and oral health organizations sent letters to the Biden Administration and to 39 Governors urging them to authorize 420,000 oral health professionals across the country to administer the COVID-19 vaccine in an effort to accelerate an end to this pandemic.

In its letter, the Oral Health Pandemic Response Workgroup asks the federal government to take certain actions to remove legal barriers that deter dental providers from choosing to participate as vaccinators where they may be allowed by some states. The letter also calls on the Governors of those states where dental providers are currently not allowed to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to include them as authorized vaccinators, thereby significantly increasing the number of authorized vaccinators in their state.

Currently, 26 states and territories allow dentists to administer COVID-19 tests, and 25 states allow them to administer the vaccine. Only 14 states allow dental hygienists to give the vaccine.

“The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on our nation has been staggering,” the Workgroup wrote to officials. “This devastation has exposed long-standing health and social inequities across our country, including among Hispanic, Black, Indigenous and other people of color; residents of rural areas; and people with disabilities. These groups are disproportionately likely to face challenges in getting a COVID-19 vaccine.”

Oral health professionals, who have been significantly underused in response to this national emergency, are uniquely situated to ensure underserved communities are able to access the vaccine. This workforce – including more than 200,000 licensed dentists and more than 220,000 licensed dental hygienists – is distributed across the country in every community.

Each year almost 30 million Americans visit a dentist but not a physician. Oral health professionals have the necessary education and experience to serve as vaccinators. Authorizing them to administer COVID-19 tests and vaccines would provide them with the opportunity to become engaged in the national effort to end this pandemic and, importantly, could increase needed access points for vaccinating the population.

Oral health professionals can also serve as trusted sources of accurate information to promote distribution of the vaccine. They can be especially impactful in hard-to-reach areas and with people at the highest risk of experiencing the devastating impacts of this virus.

The letter, which can be found [here](#), was sent two weeks after the United States marked 500,000 lives lost to the pandemic. Removing barriers would not only allow additional providers to join the effort to end this pandemic but also help save lives and set the stage for rebuilding the economy.

A list of signatories to the letter is below:

American Association of Dental Boards
American Dental Association
American Dental Hygienists Association
Arcora Foundation
Asian Resources, Inc.
Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Community Catalyst
Dental Trade Alliance
DentaQuest
DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement
Hispanic Dental Association
National Dental Association
National Rural Health Association
Oral Health Progress and Equity Network
Project Accessible Oral Health
Santa Fe Group

The Oral Health Pandemic Response Workgroup is an ad hoc gathering of executives across the dental landscape. We represent providers (dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants), dental plans, dental service organizations, dental practices, payers, dental supply manufacturers, state dental boards, community clinics, the public health community, government, academia, philanthropy, advocates, and members of the community (including racial and ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, and rural Americans).

The DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement is a nonprofit organization working to transform the broken health care system and enable better health through oral health. Through strategic grantmaking, research and care improvement initiatives, we drive meaningful change at the local, state and national levels. The DentaQuest Partnership is affiliated with DentaQuest, a leading U.S. oral health enterprise with a mission to improve the oral health of all. Find out more at www.dentaquestpartnership.org.