

Working Teams Update

Pandemic Response Workgroup

May 19, 2021

Effective Messaging & Communication

Meeting: May 10, 5 attendees plus staff

Top Takeaways:

- The pandemic laid bare the intolerable inequities and inadequacies of the oral health system.
- The group aligned on the idea that the most important things we need to communicate at this time are:
 - the importance of oral health to overall health
 - the need for equitable and accessible oral health care
 - to identify and eradicate the bias and racism embedded in the oral health system
- We agreed that there are three audiences that we need to address: the public, policymakers, and providers.
- We asked ourselves the question: How can our team along with the PRW help amplify a unified message of equity and access?

Next Steps: To answer that question we will first research which organizations in the field are doing the best messaging on equity so that we can then discern what if anything is missing and then decide next steps.

Data & Research

Meeting: May 11, 2 attendees plus staff

Top Takeaways:

- There is significant interest in increasing collection of oral health data, particularly equity-related data, and making it widely accessible and actionable.
- The following are the agreed-upon aims for the group:
 - Increase awareness of available data sources by querying and mapping which groups are collecting data at the national and state levels
 - Identify and share information on funding resources to support enhanced data collection and strengthen the data infrastructure
 - Ensure data resources include data on access, care and outcomes for diverse patient populations
 - Identify opportunities to collaborate for purposes of maximizing efficiency, avoiding duplicate work and achieving synergies when possible
 - Track and monitor COVID-related data initiatives that may have relevance for the Working Team and PRW

Next Steps: We will begin our work with the first three of these aims, over the next few months.

Oral Health Integration

Meeting: May 11, 4 attendees plus staff

Top Takeaways:

- There has been a lot of encouraging work in recent months to examine and promote oral health integration, including:
 - The recent release of the Primary Care Collaborative's report "Innovations in Oral Health and Primary Care Integration"
 - The Harvard School of Dental Medicine's "Resource Library for the Integration of Oral Health and Medicine"
- The group discussed opportunities to promote oral health integration, including:
 - Engaging consumers to create demand for a different approach to care delivery that includes oral health integration
 - Broadening the "interface" to include in care coordination other providers in addition to physicians and dentists (e.g., PAs, NPs, dental hygienists)
 - Taking a "population-based approach" to care integration, including a focus on kids, seniors, veterans, and rural populations.

Next Steps:

- Health centers already have co-located dental and primary care services. What have they learned about improved patient satisfaction and quality? We should engage HRSA's Bureau of Primary Health Care and see if leadership would be willing to have a call with us and talk about what they've been doing and opportunities to promote oral health integration.
- It will be important to review the Surgeon General's oral health report when it is released and see if there are policy opportunities identified to promote oral health integration.

Dental Benefits in Medicare & Medicaid

Meeting: May 10, 6 attendees plus staff

Top Takeaways:

- Congressional champions support adding a dental benefit to **Medicare** Part B this session, but the “pay for” is a challenge as it is competing for other priorities in the big infrastructure bill. Thus, it will be a steep climb to get this through Congress this session, especially as the White House does not seem on board with making it a priority.
- HPI, FUSA and CC are collaborating on an issue brief outlining the potential economic impacts of having an adult dental benefit in **Medicaid** in every state; this could help us persuade Congress to enact a mandate for adult dental in Medicaid. In the meantime, pregnant/post-partum people and former foster youth are “first up” in Congress’s effort to add a Medicaid dental benefit by population group.
- At the state level, there has been lots of activity in the 2021 legislative sessions, with ~30 bills filed to extend **Medicaid** dental coverage to selected groups of adults. For example, HB 172 in Louisiana – adds comprehensive dental benefits for adults with developmental disabilities.

Next Steps: We will meet again in early June to consider possible advocacy strategies based on the issue brief looking at economic benefits from an adult dental benefit in Medicaid. We are pausing on Medicare action pending openings for strategic advocacy in Congress over next weeks or months.