



REPORT OF THE MISSOURI COALITION FOR ORAL HEALTH

PUBLISHED JUNE 2025

WHO WE ARE

The Missouri Coalition for Oral Health (MCOH), a private non-profit 501(c)(3) advocacy agency, is a statewide network that brings Missourians together to pursue the vision of quality oral health for all. The Coalition is a catalyst for change, striving to ensure all Missourians have access to quality health care that improves oral health. The Coalition works to address the significant oral health challenges faced by much of the state's population in the varied and diverse communities of rural, urban, and suburban areas of the state.

Our mission is to improve oral health with all Missourians by advocating for sound public policy. The Coalition has demonstrated the capacity to leverage the support of members, member organizations, and partner organizations for the improvement of oral health policy. The Coalition is committed to advocating for and promoting lasting solutions to oral health challenges in Missouri that can be found through policy changes, as well as systems reform, that benefit those most in need. The Coalition is the only place where Missourians come together in pursuit of shared goals for improving oral health. The Coalition elevates health equity as a core value through advocacy, coalition-building and project development to increase access to quality oral health for the two million Missourians who do not get the care they need. The Coalition is the premier resource for oral health policy and advocacy in Missouri. The policy agenda represents the shared goals of more than 500 members and 40 organizations statewide. The mission, vision, and principles serve as the guide for all work undertaken by the Coalition.

Our vision is oral health for all Missourians. The Coalition seeks to positively impact the health of Missourians by revolutionizing oral health to create an effective and equitable health system that results in improved oral health and well-being for everyone. While efforts to advance the momentum generated around oral health policy in Missouri continue, the Coalition has shown strength and resilience in both continued development of a statewide network of oral health advocates and in reaching important oral health policy goals. Although oral health is an often-ignored health policy issue, the Coalition remains dedicated and optimistic in its continued work and successes with legislative champions and policy makers to advance oral health as a topic of importance among Missouri's decision-makers.



Our Principles

- Oral health is integral to overall health.
- All Missourians should have access to comprehensive, high-quality health care.
- Our policy agenda is based on consensus.
- We are committed to engaging Missourians to provide input and advocacy.
- We advocate for positive change and improvement of oral health services and the health care system.



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BUILDING THE NETWORK

The Coalition is the center of a collaborative, statewide network of oral health stakeholders. Over the past few years, we have proven together that our collective impact is substantial. The reinstatement of the Missouri Dental Director position, establishment of the Oral Health Caucus, establishment of adult dental benefits in MO HealthNet, a historical increase in Medicaid dental rates, and passage of the "fluoridation notification" bill (HB 1717) – among other actions – all show that our work has real impact. **The diversity of experience, knowledge and skills of network members, coupled with a shared vision and purpose, create opportunity for greater collective impact.** Together we can create a more organized system of care and support that contributes to improving Missouri oral health and achieving community health.

The Coalition was incorporated in 2006 and reorganized in 2011 with the support of the Health Forward Foundation, the Missouri Foundation for Health and the REACH Healthcare Foundation. New bylaws and a new governance structure were established to support the Coalition as an advocacy organization aimed at improving the oral health of Missourians. A new Executive Director, Gary Harbison, was hired in 2011. The Coalition is a member of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC) and the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN). Coalition members include organizations, oral health advocates, community members and professionals throughout Missouri.

**THIS REPORT INCLUDES CONTENT FROM
JANUARY 2024 – MAY 2025**

POLICY AGENDA

The **Coalition policy agenda** is formed through a consensus decision-making process of the Board of Directors to ensure the support of a broad-based constituency that includes representation of diverse oral health policy perspectives. MCOH views its work through an equity lens by placing more attention on incorporating community voices to provide input to MCOH's agenda and elevating these voices in the policy making process. MCOH strives for its policy agenda making process to represent the best ideas of Missouri's health, oral health and consumer advocates.

- Reduction of tobacco use and vaping to improve Missouri oral health.
- Incorporation of oral health care in school-based health care.
- Expanded coverage of and access to silver diamine fluoride for all Missourians.
- Improvement of MO HealthNet by implementing best practices and system improvements to increase provider participation and MO HealthNet participant usage.
- Inclusion of a comprehensive dental benefit in MO HealthNet.
- Protection and expansion of public water system fluoridation.
- Expansion of access to dental sealants for children without routine dental care.
- Inclusion of a comprehensive dental benefit in Medicare.
- Implementation of a statewide public awareness campaign about the importance of oral health to overall health.
- Strengthening provider networks and expansion of service delivery of dental care for high-risk, vulnerable, MO HealthNet and uninsured populations, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Incorporation of oral health in the patient-centered medical home.

PREVIOUSLY ON THE COALITION'S POLICY AGENDA AND ACCOMPLISHED

- Reinstatement of the Missouri State Dental Director position.
- Establishment of an Oral Health Caucus in the Missouri General Assembly.
- Reinstatement of the MO HealthNet adult dental benefits.

COALITION SUCCESSES TO DATE

- Identification of legislative oral health champions;
- Establishment of the Missouri Legislature's Oral Health Caucus;
- Reinstatement of the State Dental Director position (including successful fundraising);
- Passage of oral health legislation (including the "fluoridation notification" bill and telehealth legislation which allows for the development of teledentistry);
- Establishment of August as Missouri Oral Health Awareness Month;
- Holding Missouri's only Oral Health Policy Conference;
- Support of local fluoridation advocates;
- Establishment of a community level, pro-fluoride website;
- Implementation of the new Missouri Dental Sealant Program in 2017;
- Inclusion of MO HealthNet adult dental coverage in the state budget each year starting in 2015, resulting in the establishment of adult dental benefits in 2015 and implementation in 2016. Over \$118 million in Missouri Medicaid adult dental services have been delivered since reinstatement; and
- Inclusion of an unprecedented rate increase (from approximately 39% of usual and customary - UCR - to 80% UCR) for MO HealthNet dental services.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Coalition has developed a theory of change that succinctly addresses the primary mechanisms for advancing policy change in service to the mission. The Coalition’s work on theory of change guided goals, strategies and tactics, which supported development of the strategic plan.

The strategic plan enforces the Coalition’s charge to build broad-based support within the oral health community, within the community of advocates, and among those with an interest in oral health who do not fall within the traditional dental provider and professional realm. The strategic plan is broad-reaching and strives to ensure the underserved and marginalized populations are valued and involved in Coalition activities.

MCOH is committed to advancing oral health systems change that is equitable and responsive to the needs of diverse communities in Missouri. In 2022, MCOH added the following to the strategic plan. The Coalition will advance equity, diversity and inclusion of all Missourians and partners as priorities in policy, program and systems change work through an inclusive, welcoming, and nurturing environment designed to foster a sense of belonging and commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion.

The Coalition logic model establishes the overall thrust of the organization in effecting policy, network engagement, and improving the oral health of Missouri. The Coalition is a data-driven organization that incorporates data and analysis to monitor and support Coalition operations.



EVALUATION

The Coalition is a learning organization committed to creating positive policy and systems change through collaboration and unity around a policy agenda.

The Coalition makes use of a variety of operational and performance measures, including financial diversity and network fidelity, to guide Coalition and policy decisions. As a network of members, partners and stakeholders, the cohesiveness of the Coalition is paramount to goal attainment. In effect, without a functioning network of supporters and advocates, policy goals are unlikely to be obtained, and sustained movement toward the mission of improving the oral health of all Missourians will not be tangible.

The Coalition has, since reorganization, attended to the nature and unity of the network through an annual membership survey. Specific areas of measurement include member outcomes, Coalition capacity outcomes, policy outcomes, advocacy efforts and engagement and support of the policy agenda.

The Coalition holds an Oral Health Policy Conference and Oral Health Legislative Awareness Event each year to guide the discourse on oral health policy in informed and productive directions that support the mission and policy agenda, while drawing public attention to oral health as an important health care issue in Missouri. The Oral Health Policy Conference challenges participants to evaluate and integrate new information and new perspectives, to think broadly about oral health and the many factors that contribute to the success or failure to achieve oral health for all Missourians, and to assess the ability of the community of oral health advocates to leverage change now and into the future.

The Coalition works to build the advocacy capacity and focus of members and partners in building leverage for systemic policy changes through education and unified action to support policy goals such as the Oral Health Legislative Awareness Event. The Oral Health Legislative Awareness Event includes direct advocacy training and provides members key opportunities to connect with legislators and decision-makers. Because the Oral Health Policy Conference and Oral Health Legislative Awareness Event are unique venues for oral health dialog in Missouri, a specific set of measures are made around these events.

ORAL HEALTH POLICY REVIEW

- Legislative contacts were made during the 2024 and 2025 sessions. The Coalition received support from established oral health champions, but also gained support from new legislators.

- There continues to be broad bi-partisan support for oral health policy change.

- Ongoing advocacy efforts to secure continued implementation of MO HealthNet adult dental coverage occurred through the work of the statewide network of Coalition members and partners.

- Since establishment of adult dental coverage in 2016, over \$118 million in Missouri Medicaid adult dental services have been delivered. Missouri has seen a 46% reduction in emergency department (ED) usage for untreated dental conditions, and an estimated Medicaid savings of over \$2,025,000 for non-emergent dental visits in EDs.

- MCOH worked diligently to secure funding in the SFY 2025 and 2026 budgets for the continuation of MO HealthNet and adult dental coverage. The Governor signed the SFY 2025 budget with continued inclusion of adult benefits and maintained Medicaid rates, which were increased in 2022 to levels on par with commercial insurance rates. The SFY 2026 budget includes adult dental benefits with maintained Medicaid rates. The SFY 2026 budget also includes funding to support the Elks Mobile Dental Unit and Donated Dental Services. The Governor is expected to sign the SFY 2026 budget.

- The Medicaid Work Group, which is part of the Policy Committee, met multiple times to look at possible enhancements to Medicaid dental coverage. A document with a list of priorities for policy change was created and approved by the Policy Committee. Due to the work of the Medicaid Work Group, MO

HealthNet made changes to the MO Medicaid Dental benefits in 2024 and 2025. Periodic Exams (D0120) were added to limited coverage, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), which allows dental providers to provide a dental home for MO Medicaid patients. The use of Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) (D1355) was expanded to include children under 21, pregnant women and nursing home patients.

- In 2025, dental extraction and sedation rates were increased to 80% UCR. Moderate sedation and extractions are available to those with the limited adult dental benefit, including individuals with I/DD. Extraction and sedation rates were not increased as part of the 2022 rate increase, which has been a barrier for providing the necessary care for MO Medicaid patients. The Dental Anesthesia codes (D9222 - General Anesthesia first 15 minutes and D9223 - General Anesthesia each additional 15 minutes) added to the limited adult benefit effective April 1, 2025. The SFY 2026 budget includes an increase of the Medical Provider General Anesthesia rates to 63% UCR effective July 1, 2025. This increase will help dental providers be able to provide services in Ambulatory Surgical Centers and Outpatient Hospital Settings, which has been an issue.

- In 2024, the Coalition supported HB 1621, HB 2075, SB 778, and SB 1215. HB 1621 supports local decision-making by ensuring information about community water fluoridation (CWF) is provided to the decision-makers by the local health department. HB 2075 and SB 778 establishes the Dental and Dental Hygienist Compact, which establishes provisions relating to licensure of dentists and dental hygienists, including license reciprocity. SB 1215 creates provisions relating to vaccine administration by dentists. This would allow for greater access to

vaccines and would be a convenience for patients seeking vaccines. None of the bills passed during the 2024 legislative session.

- In 2025, the Coalition supported SB 327 and HB 56. These pieces of legislation would establish a Dental and Dental Hygienist Compact. Passage of SB 327 and HB 56 would lead to increased access to care by removing barriers to care provisions by dental professionals from other states. HB 56 was passed by the House and sent to the Senate where it was attached to an omnibus health bill, SB7. In the final days of the 2025 session the Senate concluded business early following unrelated use of "calling the previous question" to end debate and move legislation. This controversial procedure effectively ended all other Senate work. Therefore SB 7 was not passed.

- The Coalition continues to be an active member of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC) and the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN). Coalition staff serves on the ANOHC Board and in multiple capacities with OPEN to continue moving oral health and equity forward.

- The Coalition continues to provide functional support to local fluoridation advocates regarding local community water fluoridation (CWF) initiation and rollback efforts. In 2024, Branson and Sarcoxie discontinued CWF. Lake Winnebago voted to continue fluoridating. Independence held periodic workgroup meetings related to CWF but no formal plan of action was established. Efforts to initiate CWF in Versailles emerged. So far in 2025, there are three rollback (cessation) attempts. Rolla, Hannibal and Crane have initiated the 90-day notification period. In May 2025, the Rolla City Council voted 10 to 1 to continue fluoridating.

INNOVATION AT WORK

• In 2024 and 2025, the Coalition began years 3 and 4 of a **four-year project funded by the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council**. MCOH, in partnership with Enable Dental, are developing and implementing pilot teledentistry programs across Missouri to increase access to dental health care services for individuals with I/DD. Additionally, MCOH and Enable Dental have developed and implemented specialized trainings in Missouri that include the use of teledentistry solely for individuals with I/DD. Trainings include best practices for dental health care services and awareness of special challenges - behavioral, physical and cognitive – that individuals with I/DD may have. This project includes intensive community engagement, provider outreach, education and development of teledentistry to bring services to individuals with I/DD in order to reduce health inequities. Through this project, MCOH is building community awareness of teledentistry through the use of various education outreach strategies including but not limited to social media, in-person and virtual group information sessions. MCOH and Enable Dental are engaging and collaborating with community members, individuals with I/DD, dental schools, dental hygiene schools, health care providers, long-term care facilities, FQHCs, LPHAs, organizations serving individuals with I/DD and community organizations working to ensure public health and the health of individuals with I/DD. Community members and organizations are involved in a process to create a community plan to integrate teledentistry into each community's existing health services. Teledentistry services and mobile dentistry are reaching those not currently able to access dental care. From 2022-2024, Enable Dental has provided oral health services to 688 individuals with I/DD through teledentistry and mobile dentistry in the following counties: Adair, Clay, Cooper, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Platte, St. Louis, St. Louis City, St. Charles,

St. Francois, and St. Peters.

Dental services provided to the 688 dental patients with I/DD included: oral exams, cleanings, x-rays, fillings, extractions, fluoride treatment, iodine mouthwash, silver diamine fluoride, and deep cleaning. Through surveying of dental patients with I/DD and their family members/caregivers, an overwhelming majority of dental patients reported that the Enable Dental provider met their oral health needs and made appropriate accommodations to meet their physical and/or developmental needs. The majority of dental patients have reported they were either "Very Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied" with their dental provider and with the teledentistry services they received. The majority of dental patients have also reported they are either "Very Likely" or "Somewhat Likely" to see their Enable Dental provider again; to recommend their Enable Dental provider to a family member or friend; and to recommend teledentistry to a family member or friend.

• In October 2022, the Coalition received funding from CareQuest Institute for Oral Health to **design a dental alternative payment model (APM) for individuals with I/DD by testing incentivized payments for dental providers**. This project is laying the groundwork for future implementation of an APM in Missouri. An APM for people with I/DD will create system change to increase access to care and reduce dental health disparities. By using select and actionable metrics, an APM will increase the focus on quality, increase dental team capacity to successfully provide preventive care and treatment for people with I/DD, and increase person-centered dental care. Funding was renewed and Phase 2 began in 2024 and is continuing in 2025. MCOH is conducting this work in partnership with Enable Dental, Southeast Missouri (SEMO) Health Network and Elks Mobile Dental Unit. In 2024, 630 individuals with I/DD received dental services through

teledentistry or mobile dentistry in 24 counties throughout the state.

• **The MO Medicaid Matters Campaign** continues to be very effective in engaging dental providers who are currently not MO HealthNet providers. Since early 2023, MCOH's Dental Medicaid Facilitator (DMF) has worked with over 300 dental providers by providing resources, answering questions and assisting with MO HealthNet enrollment and credentialing processes. These providers are from LPHAs, private practices, FQHCs, and dental schools. With help from the MO Medicaid Matters campaign and work of MCOH's DMF, Missouri has seen an increase in the number of providers enrolled with Medicaid and the number of Medicaid participants accessing care. In State Fiscal Year 2023, an additional 184 dental providers enrolled with Medicaid. A significant increase in access to dental care also occurred. During SFY23, 50,180 more Medicaid participants accessed dental services through Medicaid than during SFY22. This increase continued in SFY24. A total of 265 new-to-Medicaid dental providers enrolled in Medicaid, and an additional 30,837 Medicaid participants accessed dental services compared to SFY23. Since SFY22, there has been an 81% increase in access for Missouri's dental Medicaid patients. The following numbers represent the total individual patients who received dental Medicaid care as indicated by claims submitted (SFY22 - 344,119; SFY23 - 394,299; and SFY24 - 425,136). In January 2023, 36 of Missouri's 114 counties did not have a dental Medicaid provider available. In 2024, that number decreased to 25. Eleven (11) rural counties that previously did not have Medicaid dental providers now have at least one dental provider accepting Medicaid. The following counties saw the biggest increase in credentialed providers since 2022: Boone, Cass, Greene, Jackson, Lincoln and St. Louis.

THE ORAL HEALTH POLICY CONFERENCE

The Missouri Oral Health Policy Conference is designed to advance and broaden the discussion about oral health policy in Missouri and to increase health equity awareness. The conference provides an opportunity for the network of members, partners, community-based stakeholders and state workforce to network together and discuss strategies to elevate oral health equity as a core value and advance dialogue and awareness of oral health policy challenges as a social justice issue.

The Coalition held its eleventh statewide Oral Health Policy Conference on March 6 and 7, 2025 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel & Convention Center in Jefferson City. The conference theme was "Igniting Innovation" and included a variety of pertinent topics such as: national oral health policy; Missouri veterans oral health; oral health and justice in Missouri prisons and drug court; innovating workforce pipelines; medical-dental integration; facilitated discussion groups with the following topics – veteran oral health, medical-dental integration, access to care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, seniors and oral health, community water fluoridation, and maternal and child oral health; the new Medicaid provider experience in Missouri; and state work being done to increase attendees' overall awareness about health equity and current issues and challenges in accomplishing the mission of MCOH. Conference attendance was solid with 136 registrants.



11 YEARS OF ORAL HEALTH POLICY CONFERENCES

2014 *Oral Health by Design*
2015 *Moving Forward for Oral Health!*
2016 *New Horizons in Oral Health*
2017 *Victories & Challenges*
2018 *Winds of Change*
2019 *Accelerating Community Health!*
2020 *Show Me Access to Health!*
2021 *Driving Innovation - Meeting Challenges*
2022 *On-Point*
2023 *Transforming Access*
2024 *Capturing the Future*
2025 *Igniting Innovation*



"The conference topics were timely with excellent speakers. Well organized!"

**Anonymous
Conference Evaluation**



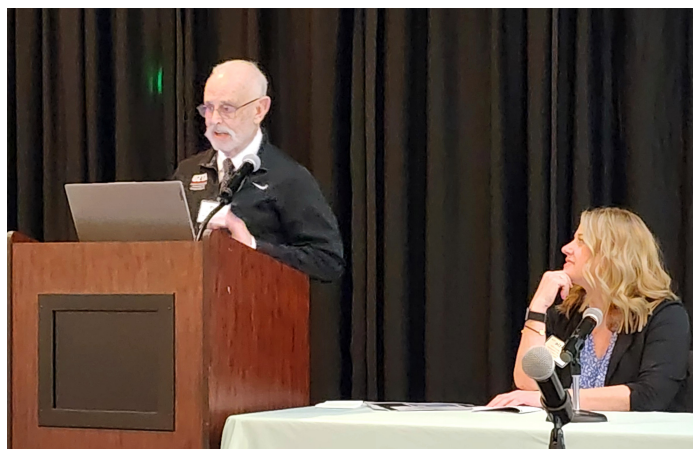


HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS INCLUDE:

- 100% of those in attendance gained new information about oral health and valued participating in the conference.
- 96% stated the conference inspired them to continue to learn.
- 91% of respondents feel more connected to the Coalition and its advocacy work.
- 94% were inspired by the conference to advocate for oral health.
- 96% believe the Coalition is helping to improve the oral health of Missouri.
- Majority of conference attendees reported appreciating networking opportunities with diverse stakeholders, session topics, learning new ideas, learning how innovation is bridging access to care issues, and the ability to collaborate with like-minded oral health stakeholders throughout Missouri.

"At the conference, you can feel everyone's compassion to improve oral health. We are able to connect with others. We work at getting to the root of the problem and share ideas on how to tackle the hurdles. Sharing real stories and struggles - the honesty."

**Anonymous
Conference Evaluation**



THE 2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY was conducted in December 2023 and January 2024. The annual membership survey measures the functioning of the statewide network of oral health advocates that make up the Coalition.

Member Ratings of the Coalition’s Capacity, Internal Functioning, and Progress on Outcomes for 2024:

- Regarding areas in which the Coalition has improved upon in the last 12 months, in 6 of 14 areas, members have consistently rated (an average of 37% or higher) MCOH’s “improvements” as “Slightly Better” or “Much Better” each year from 2014 through 2024. Areas are the Coalition’s general quality of oral health state government policy, coordination of oral health promotion activities among various sectors, cohesiveness of state and local policy agendas regarding oral health, general quality of oral health industry policy, level of state resources allocated to oral health initiatives, and general public interest in oral health issues as important to Missouri.
- MCOH has done a good job at developing its infrastructure as an organization. In all 11 categories, members’ ratings of Coalition capacity outcomes, including building the Coalition’s credibility and visibility, establishing a common priority agenda for oral health advocacy, effectively communicating with Coalition members, building the Coalition’s funding base, engaging the right stakeholders to participate in the Coalition, facilitating good conversation/dialogue about priority oral health policy issues, building Board and staff capacity, understanding the current environment of oral health policy, and using resources that members bring to the table effectively have maintained a strong rating of “Good/Very Good” from 2014 through 2024.
- Network members continue to rate membership outcomes highly. In all 7 categories, members’ ratings of MCOH’s membership outcomes, such as creating a sense of community among those interested in oral health issues, actively engaging MCOH members in concrete activities, using member time effectively, providing opportunities to learn from others, providing access to additional information, providing a concrete benefit to members’ organizations, and providing an opportunity to help make a difference on health and welfare issues have improved or maintained from 2012 through 2024.

The Coalition is committed to creating greater engagement and building greater long-term capacity for oral health advocacy within the network. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the 2024 Membership Survey respondents feel prepared to have a preliminary conversation with a community leader or active citizen about the basic issue of local fluoridation.

Coalition members assist with implementing policy strategies. Coalition members are a vital resource in implementing the policy priorities and strategies set each year. Based on 2024 Membership Survey results, 41% of respondents are willing to identify prominent community members to deliver MCOH’s message. In addition, 53% of survey respondents know one or more local decision maker(s) and 41% of those members are willing to talk with those decision makers about fluoridation.

Staying connected with members is key. In staying connected with the Coalition, 52% of the 2024 Membership Survey respondents find the Coalition Blast! to always or mostly be helpful. For those answering questions about social media, 26% follow the Coalition on Facebook.



*Missouri Foundation
for Health*



**Health Forward
FOUNDATION**

SUPPORTERS

MCOH is a non-profit corporation funded through memberships and private donations, and by Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Health Forward Foundation, Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Missouri Foundation for Health, CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, and Delta Dental of Missouri. Memberships include organizations, oral health advocates, and professionals throughout Missouri. Thank you.



**MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES**

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