



Children's
Oral Health
Network
of Maine

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Children's Oral Health Partners,

Despite these challenging times, the past year has seen some exciting developments in the collective work towards our shared vision: a Maine where all children can grow up free from preventable dental disease. Our challenge was daunting before COVID-19 and in many ways the pandemic has made things even worse. However, this Network has risen to the challenge, with a growing team of partners working together to bring meaningful, large-scale, lasting change to our oral health system.

Collaborative work in 2021 resulted in some real game-changers, even if it will take a few years to see their full impact. The following pages provide highlights on key policy changes accomplished this year as well as innovative and collaborative initiatives that are tackling the Network's strategic priorities.

A note about our name: This Network is evolving and growing rapidly. To better reflect its full identity as a network rather than a single organization, our original name of "Maine Partnership for Children's Oral Health" will now become "Children's Oral Health Network of Maine." You will find more on this evolution later in this annual report and on our new and improved website: www.maineconh.org.

As always, thank you for your commitment to children's oral health!

Becca Matusovich
Executive Director

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Becca Matusovich
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Associate Director

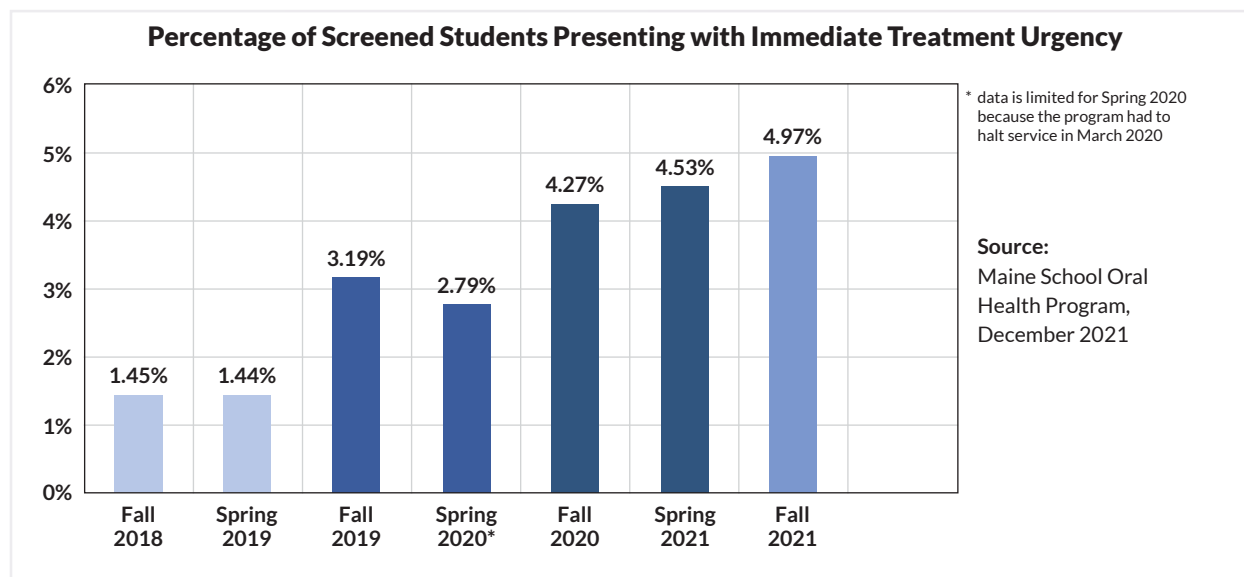
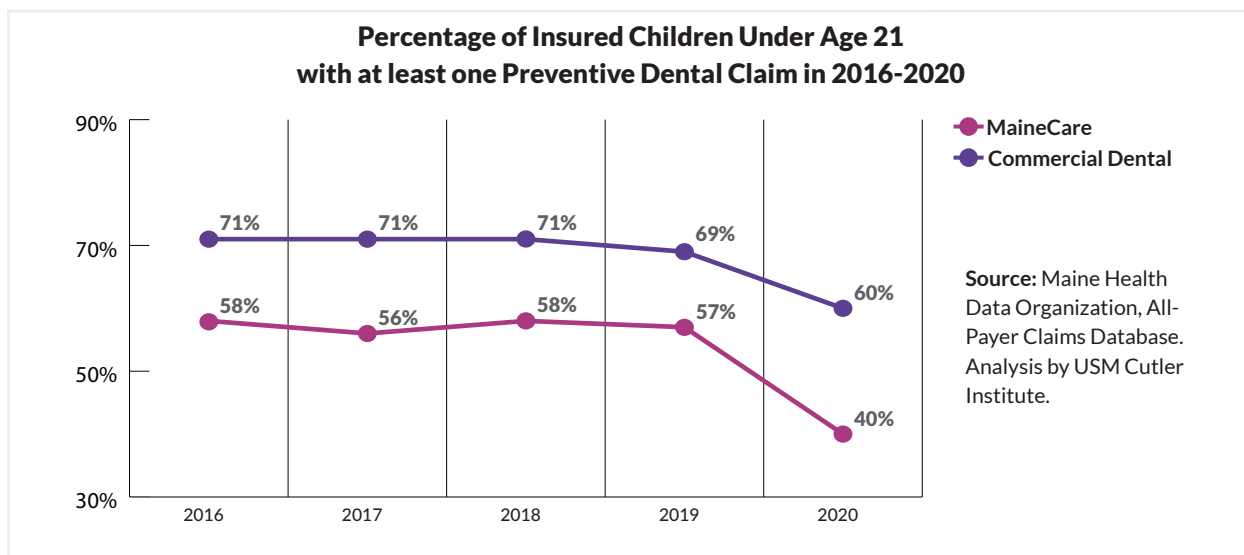
2021 Annual Report available online:
www.maineconh.org/what-we-do/comms

Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Oral Health

The rate of preventive dental care is a good indicator of whether children have access to the care they need. COVID-19's negative impact shows up starkly in the Maine Health Data Organization's dental claims data. The 2021 data will not be available until late 2022 but, given the slow recovery from the pandemic, we expect to see an increase in treatment needs. In 2021, the Maine School Oral Health Program is seeing higher active decay rates than in prior years.

"Fewer schools participated in the School Oral Health Program in 2021 due to the extra burden of managing the pandemic. Our data is showing more children are going without dental preventive services and oral health problems are going unnoticed behind children's masks. With the rise of decay seen over the past two years, we hope that more schools will opt back in to participate in SOHP for the 2022-2023 school year."

- Sherry Laliberte, Program Manager: Maine CDC School Oral Health Program



Founding Partnership Council

Over the last four years, the founding Partnership Council has completed its important task of establishing this network. With the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine now in full bloom, the Council will hand off the governance of the Network to a new Steering Committee that will be formed during 2022. Kudos and many thanks to the founding members for a job well done!



Kolawole Bankole
City of Portland Public Health Division 2018-2019*

Nicole Breton
Maine DHHS Rural Health and Primary Care 2018-2021

Deborah Deatrick
Maine Health 2018-2019*

Evelyn deFrees
The Sadie & Harry Davis Foundation 2018-2019*

Judith Feinstein
Maine Oral Health Coalition 2018-2021

Kalie Hess
Maine Primary Care Association 2018-2019*

Morgan Hynd
Maine Health Access Foundation 2018-2019
& The Bingham Program 2019-2021*

Dr. Rachel King
University of New England, College of Dental Medicine 2018-2020*

Dr. Dora Anne Mills
Maine Health 2019-2021

Dr. Christopher Pezzullo
Maine DHHS, MaineCare 2018-2019
Maine Primary Care Association 2019-2021*

Angela Westhoff
*Maine Dental Association*2018-2021*

Carolyn Wollen
Betterment Foundation 2018-2021

**No longer with this organization*

Network Initiatives and Action Teams

The Network has identified three strategic priorities to achieve our shared vision:

- Integrate oral health into primary care,
- Expand prevention in school and community settings, and
- Transform our oral health system to serve all people in Maine.

To accomplish the work needed to address these priorities, Network Action Teams consisting of diverse partners meet, set priorities and develop solutions for system change to improve children's oral health. With support from staff and project consultants, Action Team members develop projects to work on identified priorities, produce data reports, recruit funding to support these efforts, share lessons learned, and advocate for policy changes. The following sections outline in more detail the work of these Action Teams during 2021.

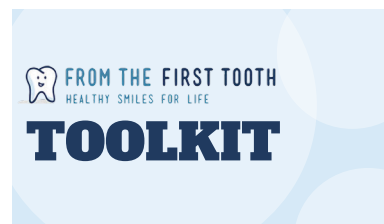
Integrating Oral Health into Primary Care

Goal: Every Maine child will have the oral health care and resources needed to reach kindergarten with a healthy mouth that has no active decay or other oral disease.

The Network's Health Integration Action Team (HIAT) works to integrate oral health into primary care especially in the first years of life when many children are unable to establish a dental home. In 2021, the HIAT made progress on several initiatives:

EXPANDING FROM THE FIRST TOOTH (FTFT) Under the new leadership of Lyvia Gaewsky and the HIAT's Health System Leadership Team, FTFT is helping more primary care providers build oral health assessments, fluoride varnish, parent/caregiver education, and referrals to a dentist into well-child visits for young children.

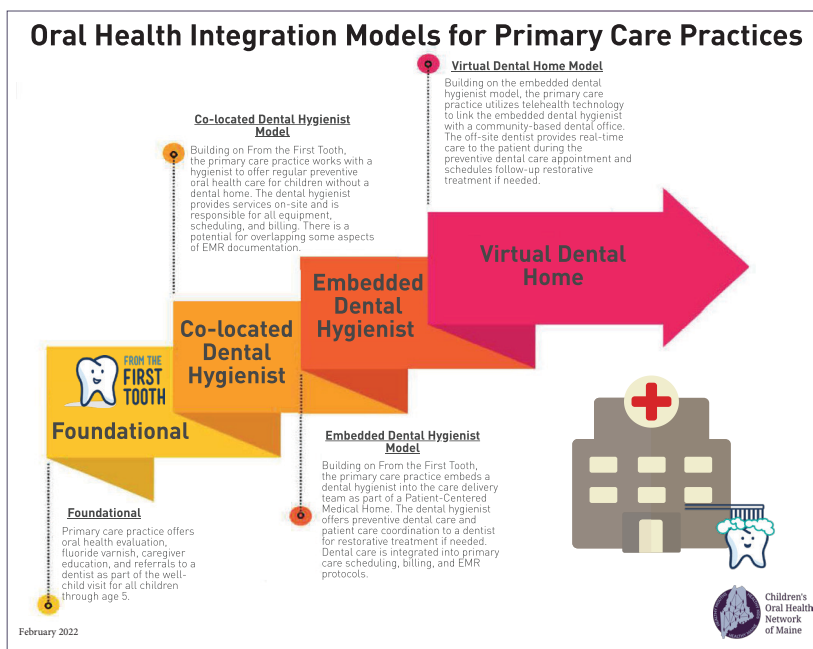
- The FTFT team maintains communication with a growing number of practices statewide (over 290 in 2021) and offers training and other implementation supports to participating practices.
- The new [FTFT Toolkit](#) provides a helpful resource for primary care practices, whether they are just starting to implement FTFT or have been for many years already.



EMBEDDING DENTAL HYGIENE AND THE VIRTUAL DENTAL HOME (VDH) MODEL in primary care settings. Led by Courtney Vannah of Medical Care Development, this HIAT project is developing an innovative prototype to build on the foundation of FTFT and integrate preventive dental care more comprehensively into the primary care medical home.

RESEARCHING AND EXPLORING ORAL HEALTH INTEGRATION POLICY to learn about successful models that have been effective in eight

selected states. The findings from Maine Medical Association-Center for Quality Improvement's Oral Health Integration Policy Project are helping the HIAT to identify policy priorities and potential projects to integrate oral health as a standard, reimbursable, and expected component of quality medical care in Maine.



Expanding Oral Health Services in Schools and Community Settings

Goal: Every Maine student, from pre-K to high school graduation, can receive the full range of oral health care services through a coordinated system—sustainably supported and data informed—that includes families, schools, dental providers, local organizations, and communities.

Throughout 2021, the Network’s School Action Team (SAT) convened planning meetings with partners including educators, school nurses, dental hygienists, dentists, parent advocates, funders, state program leaders, policy makers, and public health organizations. The ongoing pandemic and increasing barriers to care propel these partners to bring preventive oral health care to all students statewide in the place where they spend much of their time: school.

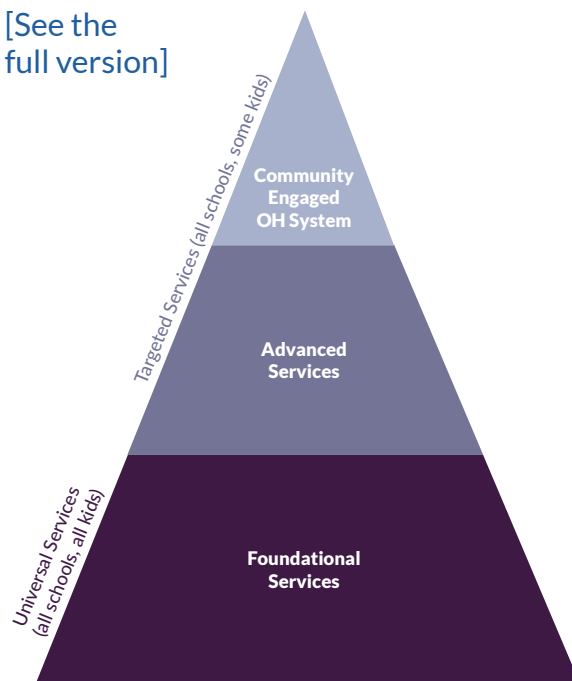
A “BLUEPRINT” FOR SCHOOL ORAL HEALTH:

The SAT is developing a “blueprint” for a comprehensive system of expanded preventive oral health services available for students in all public schools that will ultimately ensure all students have a dental home. More detailed work is now underway planning the components that must be in place to make this expansion possible including: workforce development, sustainable financing, a data system, oral health education tools, and a slate of policy changes to enable implementation.

ORAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM:

Chronic and acute health conditions, including dental pain, impact school attendance and performance. The Network is partnering with the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Count Me In! - a non-profit with the mission of reducing chronic school absenteeism - on a pilot project to increase coordination among medical and oral health providers, schools and families, and to reduce the impact of poor oral health on learning.

[\[See the full version\]](#)



Transforming Oral Health to Serve all Maine People

Goal: A Maine that doesn't rely on a dental "safety net," where every person has access to the right care at the right place at the right time.

The Maine Oral Health Funders (MOHF), an affinity group of funders that first convened over 15 years ago, created a pooled funding initiative to promote strategic systemic changes focused on improved oral health care access and quality for all people in Maine. The Network is joining forces with the other MOHF members on this critical initiative.

Objectives include:

- Sustain, immediately and long-term, Maine's non-profit dental centers.
- Grow the dental workforce to increase the system's capacity especially the number of providers that provide care for patients with MaineCare.
- Increase access to quality oral health care and improved oral health outcomes for all Maine residents.

2021 highlights:

- Developing the Maine Oral Health Centers Alliance, composed of five non-profit dental centers in Maine, to build their sustainability and capacity.
- Engaging providers, community organizations, and insurers, in conversations to identify systemic changes necessary to improve access to quality oral health care for all.

Forming the Maine Oral Health Centers' Alliance (MOHCA)

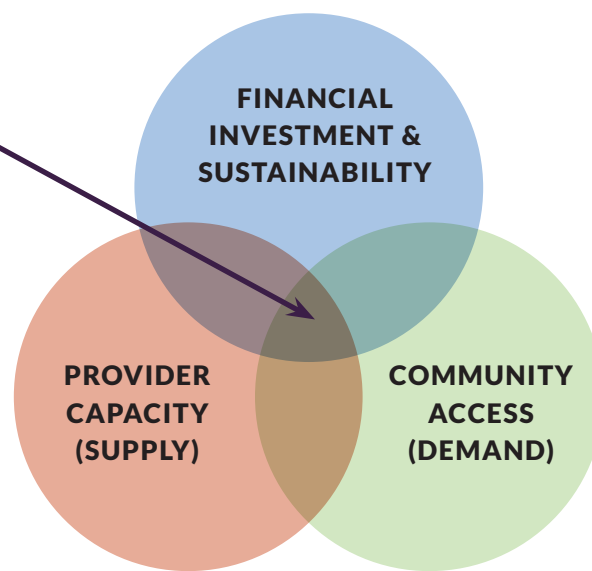


Maine's five stand-alone non-profit dental centers perform an out-sized role in serving patients with MaineCare and who are uninsured. Reimbursement revenue has long failed to cover the costs of providing services and there has been no "safety net" for these essential providers. The Maine Oral Health Funders (MOHF) Transformation Initiative supports the non-profit dental centers in formalizing a mutual support and technical assistance alliance that helps them identify opportunities for efficiencies and reduce administrative burden, test innovative models for quality care, and develop community-focused strategies to increase access to care. The MOHCA collaborates with the Maine Primary Care Association which provides similar types of support for the state's Federally Qualified Health Centers.

SWEET SPOT

Transforming Our Oral Health System to Serve All People in Maine

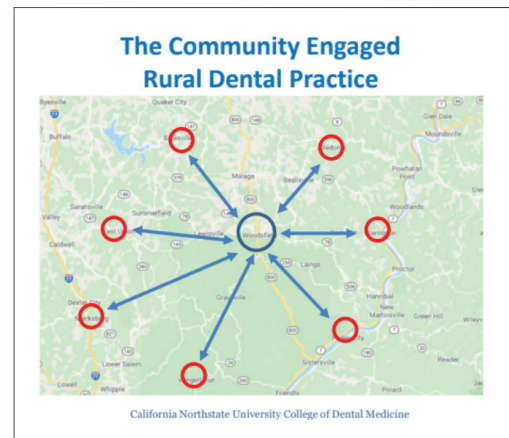
[\[See the full version \]](#)



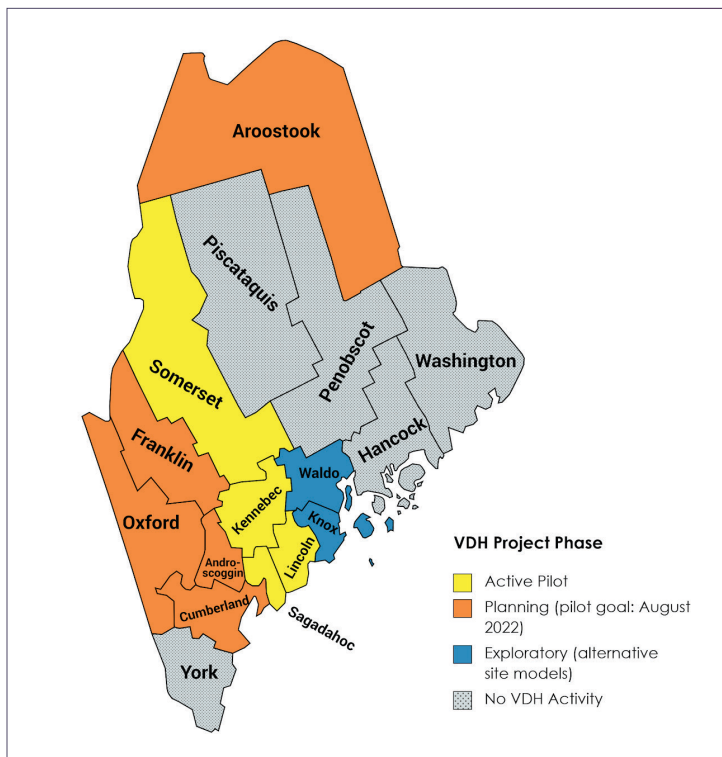
The Virtual Dental Home

A virtual dental home (VDH) is a community-based oral health care delivery system in which children become established patients with a dental practice but receive their preventive care and early intervention in school and primary care settings. Using teledentistry to link the dental provider team across locations, this model eliminates the key logistical barriers that many parents face in trying to get their children to a dental office for routine care. The VDH approach is based on a successful model developed by Dr. Paul Glassman of the University of the Pacific School of Dentistry and replicated in multiple states.

In 2021, Waterville Community Dental Center and the Jessie Albert Dental & Orthodontic Center have continued testing a pandemic-modified version of the VDH model. The pilot gathered steam in the fall when nearly 40 partners from diverse sectors - dentists and dental hygienists, dental center administrators, community action program staff, Head Start staff - attended introductory sessions to learn about the VDH model and opportunities to join the pilot. The VDH pilot now includes Local Implementation Teams of dental and Head Start partners covering nine of Maine's 16 counties.



"Based on experience in other states, we predict that 75% of the care that children need can be delivered on-site in their school or childcare setting. Given the many challenges that families in Maine face in trying to establish dental homes and getting children to routine dental appointments, the VDH model has the potential to ensure that children can get the preventive care they need early and often." —Emilie Knight, Project Coordinator, Maine Virtual Dental Home Pilot



The Maine VDH workshop series and learning collaborative for pilot sites, led by Dr. Paul Glassman, is set to begin in early 2022. This series, covering all aspects of VDH implementation, will support five local teams serving Head Start early education locations highlighted on the map at right. Additional partners will be exploring options for implementation in school and primary care settings.

We are grateful to the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs for the opportunity to participate in their [Innovation Hub Replication Projects](#).

Increasing the Network's Capacity to Work on Oral Health

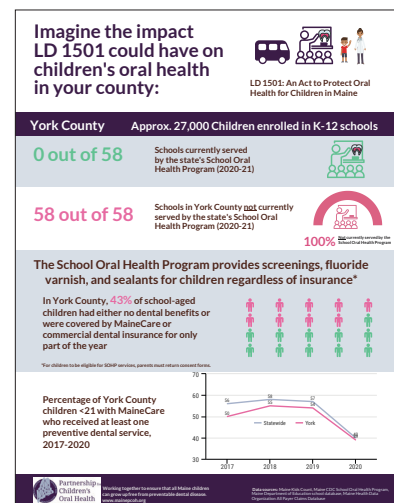
We develop and provide tools focused on oral health equity, policy, data and communications to support Network members as they build their capacity to work on oral health issues.

EQUITY Ensuring all children and families have the opportunity and the tools for good oral health is at the heart of the Network's shared mission, with health equity as a core principle. Projects in 2021 included:

- Maine Parent Federation partnered with the University of New England to develop training for parents of children with disabilities, with a goal of empowering them to maintain their child's oral health both at home and in the provider's office. [Access the training slides here.](#)
- Cross Cultural Community Services, Inc. began convening community partners and local dental providers in the Portland area. Discussions have focused particularly on barriers and opportunities for immigrant families to access dental care locally as well as preparing for MaineCare's addition of comprehensive dental benefits for adults. This relationship-building and fact-finding will inform future training for providers and community health workers.

POLICY The Network's top priority bill—LD 1501 (An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine sponsored by Rep. Lori Gramlich)—was voted unanimously out of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. It went on to passage through the full Maine House and Senate but was left unfunded by the Appropriations Committee. It was carried over into the 2022 legislative session where the work continues.

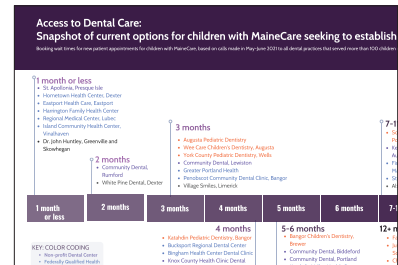
MaineCare's rate system review in 2021 led to noteworthy administrative policy changes with input from many Network members about dental rates. The dental rate changes subsequently built into the Governor's biennial budget will go into effect July 1, 2022. Importantly, dental services were identified as a top priority, with a particular focus on ensuring fair rates for preventive care.



The Oral Health Policy Advocates First convened by the Network in 2018, this group continues to meet at the beginning of each legislative session to share information and identify opportunities to collaborate on key oral health policies. In 2021, partners worked to pass several bills that drive positive change in the oral health landscape in Maine. In particular, Maine Equal Justice provided tremendous leadership to accomplish passage of a comprehensive adult dental benefit in MaineCare. Many Network partners are also participating in the MaineCare Advisory Committee's Dental Sub-committee, which is planning for launch of the benefit in July 2022.

DATA The Network analyzes and disseminates data to illustrate the challenges in Maine’s oral health system, drive program development, and help policy makers understand the systemic challenges and potential solutions. Examples of such work in 2021 include the following:

- Partnering with the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute to analyze and update the Network's annual data brief.
- Incorporating dental measures into data portals produced by the [Maine Community Health Needs Assessment](#) and [KidsCount](#).
- Sponsoring an economic analysis to project cost savings from the MaineCare dental benefit to include adults, in partnership with The Bingham Program, Maine Equal Justice, and the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association.
- Collaborating with From the First Tooth staff to create a snapshot of what dental access looks like for children with MaineCare looking to establish a dental home.



COMMUNICATIONS Network members collectively work to promote several key messages: oral health is essential to overall health, oral health inequities persist for many children in Maine, and preventive care and early intervention can set children up for good oral health for life. In 2021, Network communication tools included oral health infographics, fact sheets, and collaborative letters to the editor to elevate attention to oral health issues.

- **Website:** Network partners contributed to the development of the new Network website, due to launch in early 2022: www.maineconh.org.
- **The Network e-newsletter** helps partners stay connected and informed about opportunities for engagement with Action Teams and advocacy efforts.
- **Letters to the editor and op-eds:** In 2021, Network partners contributed letters and op-eds in media outlets around the state to support LD 1501, An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine, and helped raise awareness of the need for access to oral health prevention care for Maine children.

Portland Press Herald

Column 1 Printed May 20, 2021 Updated May 20, 2021

Commentary: Dental care is health care. Mainers need access to it.

L.D. 1501 provides a way for the dental profession and our state to protect all children from preventable dental disease.

BY LORI K. GRAMLICH AND STEVE MILLS SPECIAL TO THE PRESS HERALD

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4 COMMENTS

For over a year, the pandemic has shown us how public health policies can create domino effect, affecting families, schools and the entire economy. We have also



**HAWLEY
MAINE**

MAINE'S
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NEWSPAPER
EST. 1903

LOVES TO WIN

At 10-4, that giant
sprint awards gain
winter season **\$3**



WALKS

Map released from
Hawley Maine during
the winter season **\$3**



67%

Winter season
MEANING, MAINE



KENNEBEC JOURNAL

MAINE'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER EST. 1903

centralsouthmaine.com

MAINE'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER EST. 1903

Maine needs state-level dental health program

READERS' VIEWS

In their Maine Compass

For convenient

The View Ahead

In order to better reflect our network approach, what was originally known as the Partnership for Children's Oral Health will now be called the **Children's Oral Health Network of Maine**. Along with this new name, we are deepening and strengthening the governance structure of the Network.

In 2022, the founding Council will hand off the Network's leadership functions to a new Steering Committee. By expanding the Network's leadership roles to include a wider range of partners and formalizing engagement with various sectors we can ensure that our initiatives and vision spread more broadly across the state, maximizing our Network's power to make lasting systems change.

In 2022 we will be supporting the Network in the following initiatives and projects:

- ➔ Expanding the Virtual Dental Home (VDH) pilot and promoting teledentistry as a means to expand access to dental care.
- ➔ Working through the legislative process to support expansion of school oral health services and Maine CDC staff capacity through our priority bill: LD 1501, An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine.
- ➔ Building a workforce development plan, key policy proposals, and a financial model for implementation of the School Oral Health blueprint.
- ➔ Assisting with roll-out of the MaineCare Adult Dental Benefit which will cover comprehensive oral health care for adults over age 21 with MaineCare for the first time ever.
- ➔ Developing and testing the Health Integration Action Team's prototype for embedding preventive dental care and the VDH model into primary care settings.
- ➔ Creating a data dashboard to track the status of children's oral health and the impacts of the Network's collective action.

Children's Oral Health Network of Maine

The Children's Oral Health Network of Maine is a supportive and inclusive network of organizations and individuals working together to improve children's oral health. We strive to promote the benefits of oral health as part of overall health and unite all stakeholders around a shared vision that all children in Maine can grow up free from preventable dental disease.

The Children's Oral Health Network empowers partners across the state with resources, information, funding, and coordination support so that they can do their very best collaborative work to accomplish the systems changes needed to actualize the shared vision. We help policy makers understand the importance of children's oral health and we bring in grants and other resources that can be shared to support collective action on identified priorities. Together we can accomplish more than any of us can on our own.

Organizational Structure & Network Governance

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Staff supervision
- Financial oversight & budget approval
- Fundraising strategy/leadership
- Legal compliance for 501(c)(3) status

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Sets priorities for network activity;
- Monitors the health of the network;
- Guides network communications;
- Advises the Board regarding staffing needs, budget planning, & fundraising priorities

STAFF ROLES & FUNCTIONS

The Executive Director, Associate Director, and contracted consultants support the network in the following ways:

- Coordination support for network activities
- Network weaving and relationship-building
- Operational and financial management
- Fundraising & grant-writing
- Grant-making and oversight
- Policy advocacy on behalf of the network
- Project management

WORKGROUPS

- Health Integration Action Team
- School Action Team
- Transforming Oral Health Systems
- Virtual Dental Home Pilot
- Data and Policy
- Oral Health Policy Advocates

Updated February 2022

HEALTHY MOUTH HEALTHY KIDS HEALTHY MAINE

NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Anyone who is committed to the shared vision can join the network. The Steering Committee determines the mechanism for joining and expectations of members.

NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS

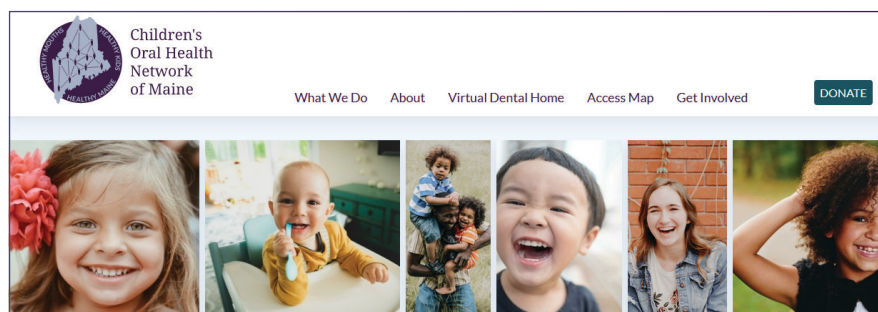
- Website, Newsletter, Annual Report
- Data products
- Legislative campaigns
- Annual network-wide gatherings
- Public communications plan/key messages

CAPACITY BUILDING

The network aims to build members' capacity for collective action, with resources and support from the backbone organization.

STATE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

The network is a forum for public-private partnerships. We aim to strengthen state government's essential role in achieving the shared vision, not substitute for it.



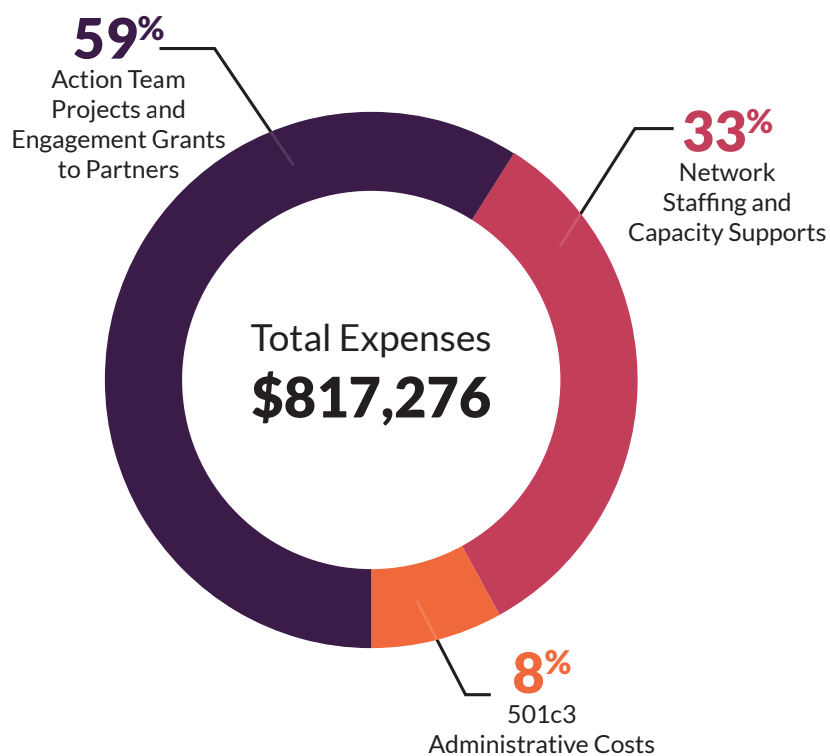
Check out our new website at www.maineohn.org!

2021 Financial Report

The Children's Oral Health Network is fortunate to have core funding to support our small staff and the costs of operating the 501(c)3 organization that provides backbone support for the network. We recruit additional project funding to pass through to partner organizations to support their capacity to work on our shared mission. We also help partners develop their own grant proposals for Action Team initiatives.

"We are excited that the Children's Oral Health Network has continued to deepen its work on children's oral health despite the pandemic, and we are encouraged by the progress made with our network partners toward the goal that all Maine children grow up free from preventable dental disease."

—Andy Klingenstein, Chairman and CEO of the Sadie & Harry Davis Foundation



Thanks To Our 2021 Funders

Sadie & Harry Davis Foundation*
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Betterment Fund*
Maine Community Foundation*

Maine Health Access Foundation
Proctor & Gamble Foundation
Stephen & Tabitha King Foundation

*Core operational funders

Partner Organizations

The Children's Oral Health Network is only as strong as those who join forces to get the work done. Our sincere gratitude to the growing list of partners in Maine who are working together to make sure all children can grow up free from preventable dental disease.



Children's
Oral Health
Network
of Maine

Advancing Oral Health
in the Safety Net
Aroostook Community
Action Program
Betterment Fund
Bingham Program
Catholic Charities of Maine,
Jessie Albert Dental and
Orthodontic Center
Community Clinical Services
Community Concepts, Inc.
Community Dental
Consumers for Affordable
Health Care
Count ME In!
Cross Cultural Community
Services
Greater Portland Health
Hanley Center for
Health Leadership
Health and Education
Communication Consultants
Helping Hands with Heart
In Her Presence
Island Dental
Kennebec Valley Community
Action Program
Kennebec Valley Family
Dentistry
Klingenstein Philanthropies
Knox County Dental Clinic
Lincoln County Dental
Maine Access Immigrant Network
Maine Association of School Nurses
Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention

Maine Chapter American
Academy of Pediatrics
Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Community Foundation
Maine Congressional Delegation
Maine Dental Association
Maine Dental Health
Out-Reach, Inc.
Maine Dental Hygiene
Association
Maine Department of Education
Maine Department of Health
and Human Services
Maine Developmental
Disabilities Council
Maine Equal Justice
Maine Health Access Foundation
Maine Medical Association
Center for Quality Improvement
Maine Oral Health Coalition
Maine Oral Health Funders
Maine Parent Federation
Maine Primary Care Association
Maine Public Health Association
Maine Resilience Building Network
Maine School Nurses Association
Maine School Oral
Health Program
MaineGeneral
MaineHealth
Mainely Teeth
Market Decisions
Medical Care Development
Midcoast Maine
Community Action

New England Rural
Health Association
New Mainers Public
Health Initiative
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Promise Early Education Center
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Development Corp.
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Foundation
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The Opportunity Alliance
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University of Southern Maine
Wabanaki Public Health
Waldo Community
Action Partners
Waldo County Dental Clinic
Waterville Community
Dental Center

And more!

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