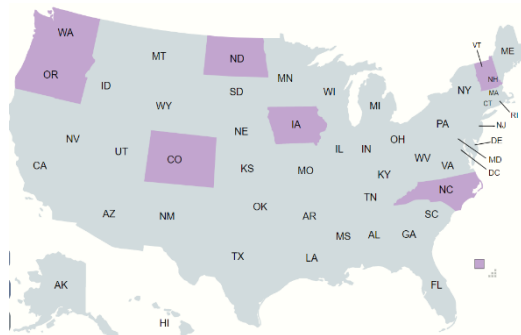


Maine's Partnership for Children's Oral Health (PCOH) recognized the importance and value in learning more about other state policies and strategies that facilitate or work towards the integration of oral health into primary care, and thus funded the Maine Medical Association's Center for Quality Improvement for this Oral Health Integration Policy Project. The intent of the project was to learn about successful oral health strategies that have been particularly effective and any state and health system policies that may be facilitating factors in that success.

Eight states were selected for this project, based on a variety of factors such as a rural landscape similar to Maine's, prior knowledge of successful oral health projects, and recommendations from oral health professionals connected nationally to other states. In alphabetical order, the states interviewed were Colorado, Iowa, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington. For this project, a questionnaire was developed with 37 questions about state Medicaid oral health policies and current strategies for the integration of and increasing access to preventive oral health services in primary care.



All eight states that were contacted agreed to participate, and interviews were scheduled using individual doodle polls. The length of the interviews ranged in time from 1 hour and 30 minutes to just over 2 hours. A second interview time was scheduled if needed to complete the questions and all interviewees completed the entire questionnaire.

The integration of oral health into primary care continues to be an important, fundamental goal for each of the eight state oral health programs. All the state oral program staff interviewed were truly passionate about their work, open to innovation, and dedicated to changing the medical perspective that oral health is the responsibility of only dental professionals, and that instead it needs to be the shared responsibility of both medical and dental providers. As the science about the oral microbiome of the mouth and its connection to overall health and chronic disease continues to expand, medical and dental providers need to collaboratively provide preventive oral health services to improve not only the oral health but overall health of their patients.

Two reports were generated from the project. A shorter document that is a summary document of key concepts and potential action items, and a full-version internal report with narrative responses to interview questions, along with key comments/takeaways, and it also included the key concepts and potential action items in the summary document. These documents will be used to generate a potential action item list for PCOH workgroups. PCOH will continue review these state policies and strategies as models for consideration here in Maine to help make oral health a standardized, reimbursable, and accepted component of quality medical care in our state.