



The Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH) is pleased to announce the March 2021 publication of “Statewide Dental Access Coordination: A Report for Pennsylvania”.

With support from a Highmark Foundation planning grant, PCOH set out to learn how Pennsylvanians find dental care, what issues prevent them from finding or scheduling an appointment with a dental provider, and whether it is feasible to identify or create a single, easily accessible resource to connect Pennsylvanians in need of dental care with the providers who want to serve them.

“We are concerned about the apparent gaps in access to dental care in Pennsylvania,” said Yvonne Cook, President of the Highmark Foundation. “Good oral health is essential to good overall health, especially for Pennsylvanians with conditions associated with dental disease, like diabetes and heart disease” explained Ms. Cook. “In addition to putting underserved Pennsylvanians at higher risk for medical complications, lack of access to dental care is leading to increasing numbers of people with dental pain seeking care in emergency departments. Dental access is a complex problem,” Ms. Cook continued. “Finding a dental provider near you that takes your insurance and is accepting new patients shouldn’t be part of it. The Highmark Foundation is pleased to support this first step in developing a tool that makes finding a dental provider easier for the average person.”

Throughout 2020, PCOH investigated the existing dental access resources available in Pennsylvania, their strengths, limitations, and opportunities to expand. In tandem, PCOH surveyed individuals and organizations to learn how they went about finding a dental provider, what was most important to them in that search, and what difficulties they encountered. The findings are discussed and summarized in the culminating [report](#).

Among the resources available at the time the report was completed, PA 211 stood out as the statewide resource with the strongest infrastructure and capacity to handle the demands of a central resource for dental access for all Pennsylvanians. In 2021 and beyond, PCOH will begin to promote PA 211 as a dental resource to stakeholders who work directly with underserved populations.

“PCOH is grateful to the Highmark Foundation for their commitment to support oral health, and therefore overall health,” said Helen Hawkey, Executive Director. “The collaboration with the PA United Way and PA 211 on this project was invaluable. We look forward to learning about the emerging new resource, RISE PA, as well, and what role it will play in improving dental access.”

Read the full report [here](#).

About Highmark Foundation

The Highmark Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private, charitable organization dedicated to improving the health, well-being, and quality of life for individuals and communities throughout the areas served by Highmark Inc. and its subsidiaries and affiliates. We fulfill our mission by awarding high-impact grants to charitable organizations that implement evidence-based programs aimed at improving community health. Central to the Foundation’s mission is identifying and continuously re-evaluation our region’s prevailing health care needs. By doing so, the Foundation remains at the forefront of those needs, well equipped to pinpoint issues that most urgently need support. For more information, visit www.highmarkfoundation.org

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