

ORAL HEALTH IS PUBLIC HEALTH

WHAT is the connection between oral health & public health ?

Public health addresses **systemic, population-level change to advance health equity and reduce disparities**. Oral health impacts overall health and overall health impacts oral health; there is no way to untie the two. **To truly impact public health and advance health equity, oral health disparities need to be addressed and confronted**, through creative and dynamic solutions.

WHY should I infuse public health into my work ?

Public health is inherently **interprofessional and collaborative**. As trusted experts in the community, **dental providers are uniquely positioned to affect both individual- and population- level change**. Dental providers can play an integral role in advancing oral and public health, as well as disease prevention through **addressing access needs, providing care, advocating for change, and providing vital and accessible health education**.

HOW can I advance public health ?

Accept and Treat Patients Enrolled in Medicaid

Medicaid provides public health insurance for those most in need. Currently, the number of Pennsylvania dental providers that accept Medicaid is not near enough to adequately meet the needs of the population. **To lessen the high burden of disease, every dental provider can provide care to just a few individuals and families who might not otherwise be able to seek or afford care.**

Provide Education and Preventive Care

Dental providers have the tools to detect disease early and prevent it outright through patient/community education, promotion of public health initiatives, and implementation of preventive and trauma-informed care. Whether through explaining the benefits of water fluoridation, answering questions about HPV vaccination, screening for head and neck cancers, or providing tobacco and nicotine cessation counseling, **providers make meaningful strides to advance health equity and save lives everyday.**

Volunteer Your Services

Dental providers can still work in private practice while volunteering in settings that provide care at no cost. Free clinics and pop-up dental clinics are only able to provide care because of donated provider time. **Volunteering can happen as regularly as one day per week or as infrequently as once per year and ensures that those most in-need have access to care that can be life-changing.** In Pennsylvania, continuing education credits may be available for volunteer hours.

Work at a Community Health Center (CHC) or Rural Health Clinic (RHC)

As a part of the dental safety net, CHCs and RHCs provide affordable care to underserved communities. **Your work is never more important than when it's provided in a safety net setting, actively addressing social determinants of health and health disparities.** Because of the disproportionate disease burden and the need for care, **these clinics are in constant need of additional providers.** Loan repayment programs may be available to providers working in these settings.

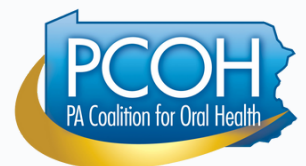
Advocate for Change on All Levels

Addressing oral health care needs on an individual level is incredibly important, but this alone isn't enough to lead to true health equity. **Systemic-level change means addressing the root of the problem, and that means advocating for change and advancement at every opportunity available,** whether with legislators, in the community, in a dental office, among colleagues, or with peers.



At the heart of the matter is that everyone deserves the opportunity for good oral health.

For more resources on oral health and public health, visit paoralhealth.org or email info@paoralhealth.org



Scholarship, Loan Repayment, and Loan Forgiveness Options for Dentists and Dental Program Students

Definitions

Scholarship

Tuition and perhaps some costs are prepaid and never added to the student's debt.

Loan Repayment

Student incurs debt, which is then repaid in whole or in part by a loan repayment program.

Loan Forgiveness

Student incurs debt and pays on that debt for a given amount of time. At the end of that time period, the loan is forgiven but not repaid.

Terms of Service

Each of these programs has distinct terms of service. The penalty for violating those terms can be quite steep, so do your homework and know your obligations.

Scholarship

The National Health Service Corps offer a scholarship program. Applications are accepted for 2, 3, or 4 years of schooling.

nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarships/overview

Loan Repayment Programs (LRP)

Pennsylvania Primary Care LRP

Offers \$80,000 for dentists and \$48,000 for hygienists in loan repayment for two years of service at a qualified site.

health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Primary%20Care/Pages/Loan-Repayment.aspx

The National Health Service Corps LRP

Offers \$50,000 in loan repayment for two years of service at a qualified site.

nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-loan-repayment-program

National Health Service Corps Students to Service

Fourth-year dental students can apply for Students to Service (S2S) and qualify for up to \$120,000 in loan repayment in exchange for three years of service at a qualifying site.

nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-students-to-service-loan-repayment-program

NOTE: You may not be in two LRPs simultaneously, but you may do more than one program consecutively.

Loan Forgiveness

Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF)

If you are employed by a U.S. federal, state, local, or tribal government or not-for-profit organization (such as a community health center or non-profit hospital system), you might be eligible for the PSLF. You must have loans under the William D. Ford Direct Student Loan (Direct Loan) Program and make 120 payments to have the remainder of the loan forgiven.

studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service

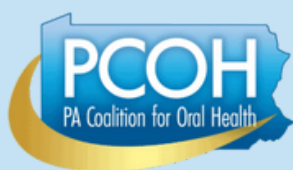
Military Service

The U.S. Armed Forces offer a Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) for students entering dental school. You will serve 1 year in the military for every year of scholarship you were awarded. The HPSP covers your full tuition while also providing you with a monthly stipend.

medicineandthemilitary.com/applying-and-what-to-expect/medical-school-programs/hpsp

If completing a residency after graduation, you can get a monthly stipend while in residency with the Specialized Training Assistance Program (STRAP), in exchange for serving.

If you took out loans to pay for your health care education, the U.S. Armed Forces could pay them back as part of the Health Professions Loan Repayment Program, up to \$250,000 of a qualifying loan.



Leading Change for
Oral Health in
Pennsylvania