



NEWS RELEASE

Public Health

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Community plan released to improve oral health of county residents



A five-year plan to improve oral health in all San Bernardino County communities has been developed by the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, local oral health experts, community partners and residents. This plan provides a roadmap for service providers and residents to work together to expand existing, successful programs and develop new methods to increase people’s knowledge of the importance of oral health, increase residents’ access to and use of dental services, build a stronger and more available oral health workforce and ensure quality data are gathered to track and assess progress.

The following are key findings of the San Bernardino County Needs Assessment compiled from various state and county data sources:

- Many children in San Bernardino County are taken to the emergency department for preventable dental conditions.
- Less than half of the county’s Medi-Cal eligible children had a dental visit in 2017.
- Pregnant women in San Bernardino County use dental services at a significantly lower rate than the California average. Between 2015 and 2016, only 33 percent of pregnant women reported visiting a dentist during pregnancy compared to California average of 43 percent.
- More than 40 percent of older adults reported not visiting the dentist in over 12 months. Statewide data shows that older adults, especially those residing in skilled nursing homes have a significant level of unmet dental needs.
- There is a high need for dentists who serve young children (0-3 years old), dentists who serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and dentists who will accept Medi-Cal.

“Oral health is an important part of overall health and well-being,” says Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, San Bernardino County Health Officer. “Untreated tooth decay and periodontal diseases lead to pain and tooth loss and are linked to other medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.”

Beyond this, poor oral health affects a person’s ability to fully enjoy life, such as the ability to smile and feel confident, to eat healthy foods, to attend school and concentrate in class, and to obtain employment. Everyone has the power to keep their mouth healthy and stop problems before they happen by brushing with fluoride toothpaste twice a day, flossing, limiting sugary foods and drinks, and visiting a dentist regularly.

To view the San Bernardino County Strategic Plan for Oral Health 2019-2024, visit bit.ly/2019PlanOH.

The oral health needs assessment and strategic planning efforts were coordinated by the Local Oral Health Program (LOHP) of the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. LOHP was established in January

2018 by the California Department of Public Health via tax dollars generated as a result of passage of the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016 (Proposition 56 Tobacco Tax).

All are welcome to participate on the LOHP Advisory Committee and in the upcoming workgroups. To learn more about oral health and/or to join the local effort, please contact OralHealth@dph.sbcounty.gov.

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