



CENTER FOR ORAL HEALTH

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023 - JUNE 2024



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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

Since its founding in 1985, the Center for Oral Health (COH) has been at the forefront of advancing access to oral health care for underserved communities. Over the past several years, including the challenging period of the COVID-19 global pandemic, our mission remained unwavering. During the height of the pandemic, COH worked tirelessly with our partners to keep our Big Bear Rural Health Dental Clinic and school-based Early Smiles Sacramento program operational. Our efforts included innovative solutions, such as drive-through dental exams and fluoride varnish treatments for students and their caregivers during school closures.

This 2024 Annual Report marks a significant milestone, as it is our first report since 2018. The past few years have been a time of reflection, innovation, and growth for COH. I assumed the role of Interim CEO in July 2024 and transitioned to Permanent CEO in February 2025, and since then, we have focused on strengthening our programs, expanding partnerships, and ensuring sustainable growth. Our efforts have resulted in increased community engagement and new opportunities to improve oral health outcomes across California.

In particular, COH has taken significant steps toward expanding services to new regions, enhancing our school-based initiatives, and exploring sustainable models of care. We are proud to have maintained financial stability during a period of significant change while also investing in the future of oral health education and prevention.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to advancing health equity. Through innovative programs, dedicated partnerships, and a steadfast focus on serving marginalized communities, COH continues to play a vital role in improving oral health access and outcomes.

I am deeply grateful for the resilience and dedication of our team, partners, and supporters. Together, we are building a future where oral health is a priority for all, and where every community has access to the care they need to thrive.

With Gratitude,

Tiffany Turner, MBA, MPH
Chief Executive Officer

BOARD CHAIR



Brendan John
Board Chair

"Promoting health equity has remained central to COH's mission"

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Center for Oral Health (COH), a year that has been marked by change, growth, and a renewed focus on our purpose. Our vision "oral health for all" embodies everything we do, from our clinical service programs in under-resourced areas, to our Statewide assessments, research, and advocacy efforts. I am proud of COH programs and dedicated staff who implement our programs in rural and urban communities. COH will celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2025. From its inception COH has led advocacy efforts on important public health issues such as water fluoridation. Over the past four decades COH is recognized for conducting a Statewide oral health needs assessment, convening advocates, and effectively developing and implementing demonstration projects for preventive dental services.

As I reflect on the accomplishments of the past years, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. COH has always prospered through collaborations and partnerships. I am thankful to our supporters and partners, who have made our achievements possible as we work together to ensure equity and access to oral health services.

I am honored to be on the board for COH and appreciate the participation of all board members who have generously dedicated their time and expertise to ensuring the continuation of the organizations mission.

Brendan John
Board Chair

REMEMBERING JOE COLANERI

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts, that we announce the loss of our beloved Board Chair, Dr. Joseph "Joe" Colaneri. Joe passed away unexpectedly on Nov 20th, 2022. Joe played an integral role at the Center for Oral Health and was a beloved friend to both staff and board colleagues. Joe joined the board in 2016. While serving on the board, Joseph held many leadership roles and actively advised the Center's Advocacy and Policy department. Most recently, Joe served as COH's Board Chair (2020 to 2022).

Joseph Colaneri was passionate about public affairs and worked as the Public Affairs Director for Foley & Lardner's LLP. His experience included government relations, association management, legislative and political analysis, employee and corporate communications, and grassroots lobbying.

Dr. Colaneri has also served as Executive Director for the Propane Vehicle Council; Washington representative for Unocal Corporation, a Fortune 100 oil and natural gas company with annual revenues of \$8-\$11 billion; and legislative assistant to both Congressman Cecil Heftel and Congressman Norman Y. Mineta. In these positions, Dr. Colaneri played an integral part in the congressional debate on national energy policy. He drafted the Wind Energy Systems Act of 1980 which became Public Law 96-345. Joe successfully lobbied for many energy-related issues and spent most of his life fighting for good.

Dr. Colaneri earned a Ph.D and M.Phil. in political science from George Washington University. He also received master's and bachelor's degrees in political science from Boston College.

Joe was a caring individual who loved to help others. Although saddened by our loss, the Center for Oral Health will continue to honor Joe's memory through our work and vision of *"Oral Health for All"*.



Joseph "Joe" Colaneri. PH.D



Our Story

Our Mission

Nearly forty years ago, the Center for Oral Health was founded as the Dental Health Foundation. Today, COH is a highly impactful non-profit organization with the mission *“to improve oral health, especially of vulnerable populations, through innovation, research, education, and advocacy.”* The Center for Oral Health lives its mission by collaborating with national, state, and local partners to develop innovative community-based strategies for improving oral health outcomes and achieving desired results.

Our Vision

The vision of the Center for Oral Health has remained unchanged since our founding in 1985: *“Oral Health for All”*.

Our Culture

The Center for Oral Health's core values are *Humanism, Getting Things Done, Acceptance & Inclusion, Maximize Sustainability, and Teamwork.*

Our Purpose

The Center for Oral Health was built upon four pillars: innovative dental services, helpful research, educational opportunities, and public policy/awareness. This blend of activities allows COH to serve the oral health needs of vulnerable populations on a variety of levels.

Innovation

The Center for Oral Health is focused on the development of innovative, cost-effective and equitable community-based solutions to improve access to oral health care and reduce disparities in access to health.

Research

The Center for Oral Health continues to play a key role in the development of public health surveillance methods in documenting the oral health status, especially in traditionally underserved communities.

Education

The Center for Oral Health offers multiple platforms to share knowledge and provides educational opportunities for healthcare professionals, including symposiums and inter-professional education seminars.

Advocate

Recognized as a thought leader in the field of public oral health and an independent voice that represents the public's best interests, COH serves as a trusted source of scientific knowledge for oral health policies.

Financial Overview

Revenue

Grant	\$1,817,750
Denti-Cal Reimbursements	\$14,350
Contributions	\$125,684
Other	\$0
Total Revenue	\$1,957,784

Expenses

Programming	\$1,620,872
Management and General	\$431,083
Total Expenses	\$2,051,955

Assets vs Liabilities

Total Assets	\$710,238
Total Liabilities	\$441,523
Net Assests	\$268,7151



Early Smiles Sacramento



Program Overview

The Early Smiles Sacramento Program has served 132,000+ families since its inception in 2016. Of those served, 60% were insured by the Medi-Cal Dental Program.

Early Smiles Sacramento (ESS) is a school-based oral health program, developed by the Center for Oral Health in partnership with the three Dental Managed Care (DMC) Plans-- Access Dental, Inc, Health Net of California, Inc, and LIBERTY Dental Plan of California, Inc.

Early Smiles Sacramento is a unique program that brings much-needed dental care to the most vulnerable children in Sacramento County. Since its inception in 2016, Early Smiles Sacramento has helped keep children healthy and ready to learn by minimizing class time disruption, providing evidence-based preventive dental services, and navigating every child to a dental home regardless of insurance coverage.

Throughout the 2023/2024 program year, the ESS program has made significant progress, expanding its reach from 15 to 17 school districts and systems within Sacramento County, including the addition of the Sacramento Academic & Vocational Academy Charter (SAVA) and Women's Civic Improvement Club of Sacramento (WCIC). Additionally, ESS began offering services at the Sacramento Youth Center and significantly increased its community presence by participating in 19 community events this program year, compared to 11 community events last year. The program remains dedicated to its mission by providing oral health education, assessments, topical fluoride varnish applications, and navigation services to students across the county, regardless of their insurance status.

From July 2023 to June 2024, the ESS program provided **oral health education to 112,205 students**, conducted **26,562 oral health assessments**, and administered **17,785 fluoride varnish treatments**. The Center provided services at **434 screening** events across 12 school districts, 2 preschool systems, 3 charter school systems, and 19 community events.



Program Statistics



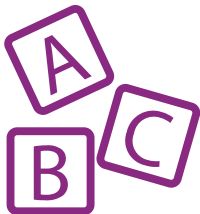
112,205 ORAL HEALTH EDUCATION



26,562 ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS



17,785 FLUORIDE VARNISH APPLICATION TREATMENTS



6,223 KINDERGARTEN ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS



10,453 SEALANT RECOMMENDATIONS



434 SCHOOL EVENTS



19 COMMUNITY EVENTS

63%
MEDI-CAL DENTAL PATIENTS
VISITED A DENTAL HOME
AFTER ESS SCREENING

43%
CONSENT RETURN RATE

132,000+
ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS
SINCE PROGRAM
INCEPTION IN 2016

Program Accomplishments

Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment

Tooth decay remains the most prevalent yet preventable health issue among children in California, leading to 874,000 missed school days annually and costing schools between \$29 and \$32 million in lost average daily attendance funding.

Senate Bill 379 permits schools to conduct onsite screenings and complete the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) with passive consent, enabling schools to report provider data through the System for California Oral Health Reporting (SCOHR) website. This approach helps reduce dental disease by connecting children to dental care, decreases chronic absenteeism, and enhances school readiness. Currently, **11 out of 12 school districts in Sacramento County are passive KOHA districts.**

The Early Smiles Sacramento team is committed to improving KOHA rates across Sacramento County. In the 2023 program year, ESS conducted 2,300 passive KOHA assessments. In 2024, ESS expanded its efforts to include 3,705 passive KOHA assessments and 2,518 screenings with active consent, **reaching a total of 6,223 kindergarten students.**

Consent Return Rate

Since 2016, Early Smiles Sacramento has faced challenges with their consent return rate, aiming to achieve a return rate of 50% or higher. In 2023, the consent return rate was 41%, and it **increased to 43% this program year.**

This improvement is attributed to efforts in building strong relationships and adapting to the needs of schools and families. By addressing the unique requirements of children, schools, and communities, Early Smiles Sacramento is able to effectively educate and provide access to oral health care.

Since 2016, the organization's commitment to fostering trust within the community has strengthened connections with parents, schools, and community members, thereby increasing their confidence in the services.

When asked how her site tripled the amount of returned consent forms, Marisol Ruiz, Student Support Coordinator at Will C. Wood Middle School, Sacramento City School District stated ***"It was a team effort; I recruited our science department to incentivize students for participating in the dental screening. We also did a lot of outreach to our parents to remind them to send back the consent forms."***

Electronic Consents

In program Year 23/24, the Early Smiles Sacramento team piloted e-consents at four sites within the Sacramento Unified School District, including two high schools, one middle school, and one elementary school. This pilot aimed to improve consent form return rates through an electronic process.

The pilot resulted in notable improvements:

Elementary School:

- 2020: 4 consents returned
- 2024: 21 consents returned (E-Consents)

High School:

- 2022: 11 consents returned
- 2024: 24 consents returned (E-Consents)

For the 2024-2025 school year, Early Smiles Sacramento will expand the use of e-consents to all middle and high school sites. Preschool and elementary schools will have the option to use either traditional paper consents or e-consents.

Heroes in Health Services Reception

On April 4, 2024, the 2nd Annual **Heroes in Health Services Reception** was held at the Golden 1 Center Lexus Lounge. This event celebrated and honored health service staff across Sacramento County, expressing gratitude for their dedication and support to the community. Attendance at this year's event doubled compared to the previous year.

During the reception, Early Smiles Sacramento recognized four healthcare heroes: **Liliana "Lily" Magana** (Twin Rivers Unified School District), **Judy Lema** (Sacramento Employment and Training Agency), **Deborah "Debbie" Blanchard** (Sacramento County), and **James "Jim" Musser, DDS** (Pediatric Dentist). Dr. Musser was notably honored with the Cathy Levering Oral Health Hero Award.



Dr. James Musser & Megan Musser

Dr. James "Jim" Musser, DDS, shared his appreciation: "Thank you so much for organizing such a fantastic event yesterday. It was an honor to receive the award from Cathy Levering."

Program Accomplishments

Translation

Sacramento County has experienced an influx of refugees from various countries in recent years, many of whom lack prior dental experiences or preventative dental education. Cultural beliefs sometimes impede their access to urgent or preventative dental care.

To address this, Early Smiles Sacramento has enhanced its community engagement by participating in back-to-school events, kindergarten roundups, and other community activities. Traditional paper and e-consents have been translated into seven of the most frequently used languages in Sacramento County: *Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Pashto, Russian, and Ukrainian*. This translation effort, combined with the use of *Language Line Solutions*—which provides 24/7 translation services in over 290 languages—has significantly improved the program’s ability to communicate with these diverse communities.

This approach has enhanced the program’s success in connecting families to care, delivering essential dental education, and alleviating the burden on school staff by helping families find appropriate oral health services. By collaborating closely with school staff, community partners, the Sacramento District Dental Society, Community Health Works, and the three DMC plans (Liberty, HealthNet, and Access Dental Plan), the Early Smiles Sacramento program effectively navigates, educates, and provides services to this vulnerable population, ensuring they receive the necessary care despite language barriers.

**LanguageLine
Solutions®**

Staff Training and Education

To ensure alignment with state and local procedures, the ESS staff participated in two training sessions related to the Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) Basic Screening Survey (BSS) and Kindergarten Oral Health Association.

The trainings focused on:

- Familiarizing staff with ASTDD Basic Screening Survey- guidelines and calibration protocols.
- Understanding the KOHA mandate and passive consent policy for KOHA screenings.
- Learning how to complete the KOHA form according to California Department of Public Health screening guidelines.
- Recognizing the differences between participating Passive KOHA and non-participating school districts.

The trainings aimed at achieving consistency and adherence to best practices in the Early Smiles Sacramento screening processes.



Early Smiles Sacramento Staff

Sacramento District Dental Society

The Center for Oral Health has partnered with the Sacramento District Dental Society (SDDS) since 2016. SDDS continues to be an outstanding collaborator, aiding the Early Smiles Sacramento staff in providing emergency dental care for underinsured and uninsured children aged 0-20 years.

This year, ESS is proud to highlight three notable achievements:

- **Nurses Meetings Participation:** Annually, ESS is invited to participate in the nurses' meetings hosted by SDDS for Sacramento and surrounding counties. These meetings offer a valuable platform to showcase the ESS dental screening program and underscores its partnership with SDDS.
- **Nugget Article Feature:** ESS was featured in the May/June 2024 issue of the Nugget, the opinion and discussion magazine for SDDS members. This publication reaches over 1,800 dentists and dental professionals, vendors, advertisers, and nonmembers, and highlights key developments and discussions within the dental community.
- **Grant Award:** The Center for Oral Health presented SDDS with a grant in recognition of their exceptional work. This grant acknowledges their significant contributions and supports their mutual goal of enhancing access to care for all.



Kevin Scott, Tiffany Turner MBA, MPH, Cathy Levering, and Rachel Shafer RDH

Big Bear Rural Health Clinic



Program Overview

The Big Bear Rural Health Clinic has had 20,000+ unique visits since its inception in 2016. Of those served, 100% were insured by the Medi-Cal Dental Program.

In 2016, the Center for Oral Health and Bear Valley Community Health District (BVCHD), partnered to open a dental rural health clinic in Big Bear, to support the isolated community of Big Bear Lake. The clinic started as a virtual dental clinic, opened 3 days a week. In 2019, the Center for Oral Health hired a full-time dentist, Damian Dauria (Dr. D), and expanded services to 5 days a week. Dr. D was born/raised in Big Bear Lake and finds great satisfaction in being able to provide high-quality dental care to his community. Today, the clinic employs 4 FTEs (6 Employees) and **averages 3,000 encounters annually**.

Big Bear Lake has a population of over 5,000 residents. Approximately 20% of the population is insured by Medi-Cal, the state's Medicaid program. The majority of the Medi-cal population in Big Bear receives primary healthcare services through Bear Valley Community Healthcare District's Family Health Center, thus creating a natural referral system to the COH's dental rural health clinic.

COH's Big Bear Rural Health Clinic is the only all-ages Medi-cal Dental clinic in the area, offering quality services to local residents; eliminating the need to drive 40 miles and over an hour down a 6,700' mountain to receive affordable dental care.

Accomplishments

Staff Realignment

In July 2023, the Center for Oral Health realigned its Big Bear staff to accommodate growth. COH hired an additional dental assistant in order to utilize two operatories at once. Instead of treating 6 to 8 patients daily, our Dentist now treats **10 to 12 patients daily**. In order to save costs and build further partnerships with BVCHD, COH has eliminated its front desk position. BVCHD provides reception services for the Big Bear Rural Health Clinic, at no cost to COH.

Dental Consultant

In August 2024, the Center for Oral Health welcomed Dr. Heather Hawkins as a consultant to review and update our Operations Manual at the Big Bear Rural Health Clinic. With her extensive expertise in clinical policy development, Dr. Hawkins has been instrumental in evaluating our current clinical practices, benchmarking them against industry best practices, and ensuring compliance with OSHA and HIPAA guidelines. Her work will help us enhance the quality and consistency of care across our programs, ensuring that our operations remain at the forefront of excellence in oral health service delivery.

Approaching Milestones

1

Medical-Dental integration

In 2024, the Center for Oral Health made significant progress toward integrating dental care into medical settings through new partnerships with Medical Managed Care Plans. These collaborations aim to enhance access to dental services for underserved communities:

- **Partnership One:** COH is working with a Medical Managed Care plan to launch parking lot dental clinics at vaccination sites, offering screenings and fluoride varnish for children and adolescents. Additionally, the Medical Plan will assist in promoting COH's Early Smiles Sacramento program by developing targeted outreach to families through their communication platform.
- **Partnership Two:** COH will provide on-site dental care at a Health Center in Sacramento. This partnership will focus on improving oral health outcomes by combining dental services with other essential resources addressing social determinants of health, such as food assistance and vaccinations.

These partnerships highlight COH's ongoing efforts to create sustainable models of medical-dental integration, ensuring that more families have access to vital oral health services.

2

Older Adults Needs Assessment

The Center for Oral Health is in the process of completing a comprehensive needs assessment focused on improving oral health care for older adults in California. This study highlights critical gaps in access to dental services and offers actionable recommendations to enhance care for this growing population.

COH plans to disseminate the final report in 2025, sharing key findings and strategies with policymakers, healthcare providers, and community organizations to drive systemic improvements in oral health for older adults across California.

3

The Impact of School-Based Dental Programs on School Absenteeism.

The Center for Oral Health is in the process of conducting a research project, *The Impact of School-Based Dental Programs on School Absenteeism*, in order to expand the available research around dental absenteeism within Sacramento County, share learning with policymakers, spotlight the Early Smiles Sacramento program, provide a fiscal analysis, and show a more direct causal relationship between school absenteeism and dental disease.

Strategic Plan



01 Access to Care



Expand programs & access to care for under-resourced, marginalized, and vulnerable populations through interprofessional collaboration

02 Thought Leader & Convener



Create infrastructure that establishes the Center for Oral Health as a thought leader & convener of diverse stakeholders in healthcare

03 Community Care Fund



Develop a Community Care Fund to support low-income families in need of equitable access to oral healthcare

04 Operations & Infrastructure



Strengthen organizational operations & infrastructure



2024

2025

2026

Acknowledgments

Leadership

Brendan John

Board Chairperson, Treasurer
Administrative Director
Urban Health Equity Pathway
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Sheila Rodriguez-Vamvas, DDS

Vice Board Chair
Clinical Associate Professor of General
Dentistry
Practice Leader for the Pre-Doctoral
Patient Treatment Center
Boston University

Huong Le, DDS

Secretary
Chief Dental Officer
Asian Health Services

Christine Chen

Director
Managing Consultant
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Big Bear Rural Health Clinic

Sherry Gunn, RDH

Early Smiles Sacramento

Briyanna Garcia, DA

Big Bear Rural Health Clinic

Jessica Nichols, DA

Big Bear Rural Health Clinic

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Access Dental, Inc

Bear Valley Community Health
District

Department of Health and Human
Services

DentaQuest

First 5 Sacramento

Health Net of California

LIBERTY Dental Plan

Sacramento Covered

Sacramento District Dental Society

The Sacramento County Oral Health
Program



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