

History of Oral Health in Massachusetts

In 2000, a Special Legislative Commission on Oral Health was established to study the oral health status, effective community prevention programs and access to dental services for residents of Massachusetts. The legislative action resulted in a course of action for better oral health in Massachusetts. The implementation of its recommendations has been deficient for low income people, poor families and children and other vulnerable populations.

In 2003, a survey of 3rd graders in Massachusetts on MassHealth (the Massachusetts Medicaid program) indicated that there were serious gaps in access to dental care and consequently as many as 40% of children surveyed had untreated decay.

In 2004, MSPCC released a policy position paper “Oral Health and the Commonwealth’s Most Vulnerable Children: A State of Decay,” which highlights the significant and long-term health impacts of poor oral health and lack of access to dental care for poor Massachusetts children and children in foster care.

In 2008, the Catalyst Institute Report “The Oral Health of Massachusetts’ Children” (January 2008) funded by Delta Dental of Massachusetts, showed significant disparities in oral health of Massachusetts black and Hispanic populations.

The goal of the coalition is to unite all stakeholders involved in oral health in Massachusetts to support a statewide agenda to address oral health disparities through specific activities that promote oral health, prevent disease and ultimately close gaps in care for children, seniors, and other underserved populations.