



OPEN House

2026 Kick-off & Connect

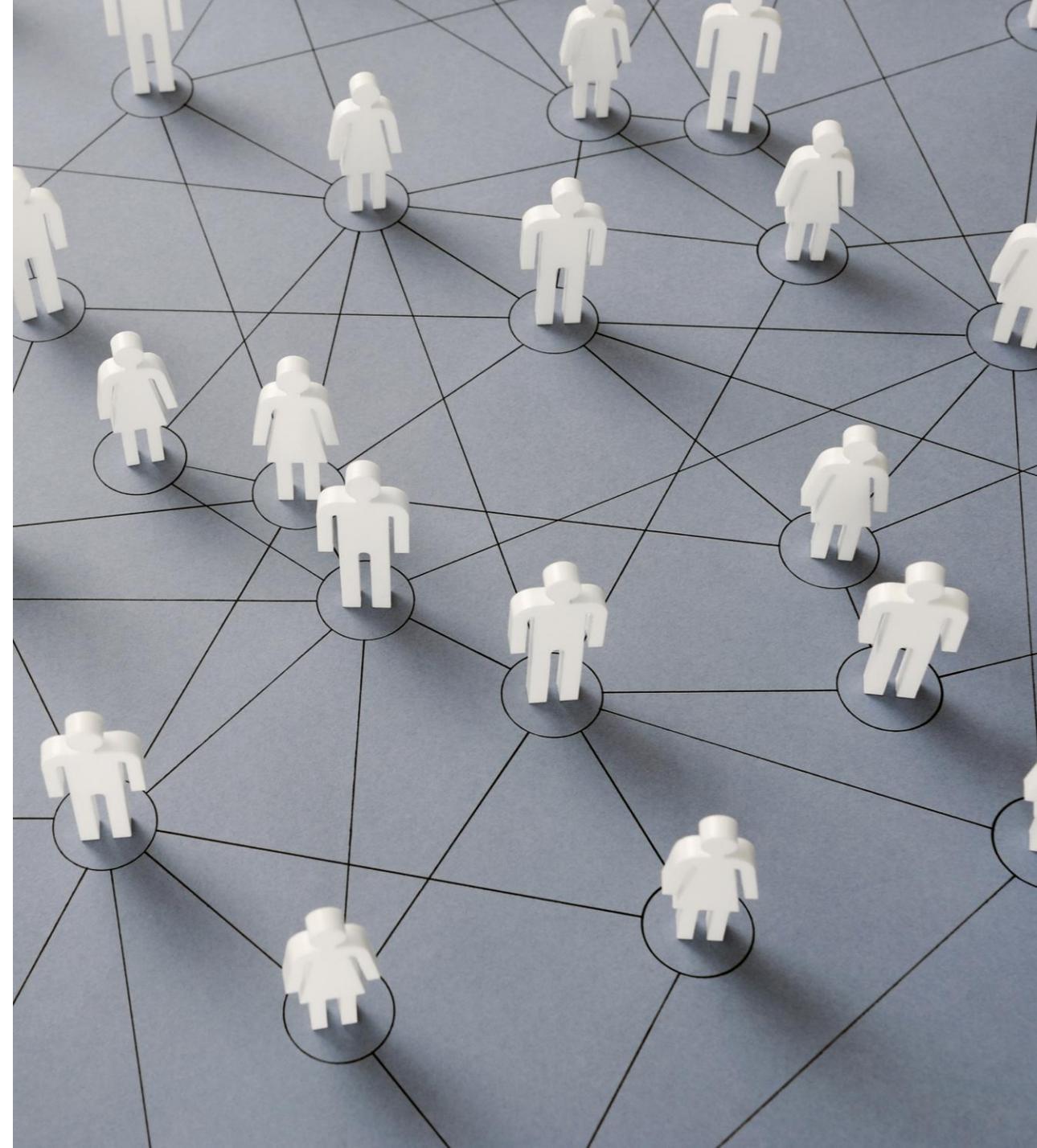
February 19, 2026



Meeting the Moment

Today calls for:

- Connection
- Clarity
- Collective action



OPEN Introductions

Welcome!

Chatbox Check In:

- **Name, Organization, State**
- **What are you looking forward to most in 2026?**
 - *In your work, your communities, or through OPEN*



Housekeeping

- Today's meeting is being **recorded**
- All lines **muted** upon entry
- Share questions & comments in the **chat box**
- If comfortable, please add your **pronouns** to your Zoom name
- Recording & slides provided **post-event**
- **Disagreements are normal. Respect is required.**

AGENDA

Purpose: to engage members in OPEN learning and action, build connections across the network, and shape OPEN's direction through ongoing feedback.

1

Welcome & OPEN Mingle

Review meeting agenda and build network connections.

2

Overview of 2026 Direction

Discuss goals, key activities, and shifts from 2025 (and why).

3

Advocacy Committee Spotlight

Provide an overview of OPEN Hill Day, policy agenda development, and training plans for 2026.

4

Call for 2026 Formal Leaders

Discuss committee roles and general application process.

5

Q&A and OPEN Reflections

Ask questions, share feedback, and help shape the network.

OPEN Mingle

What drew you to
OPEN — or keeps
you engaged
today?

OPEN 2026 Overview

Priorities, activities, and shifts

Mariah Oakley

Network Support Team



Frances Walsh (she/her)
Project Manager, OPEN
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Mariah Oakley (she/her)
Manager, Strategic Initiatives – OPEN
E: moakley@carequest.org

Organizational Leads



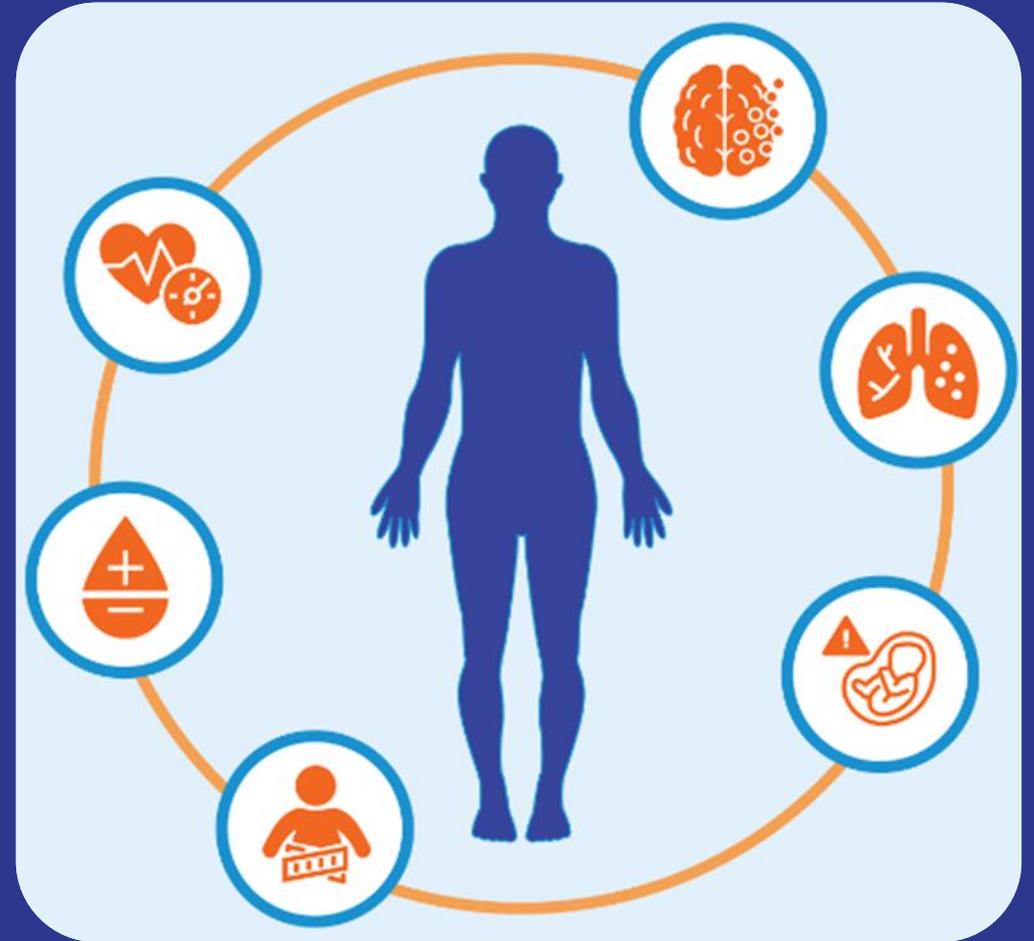
Grandy Cody (she/her)
Vice President, Strategy
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Trenae Simpson (she/her)
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OPEN's Unique Role

- **Amplify** community voices
- Build capacity for **grassroots** advocacy
- **Network** centered on JEDI principles
- Community of **change agents**
- Diverse membership of **oral health system** stakeholders



Priorities for OPEN in 2026: Based on Your Feedback



Simplify and improve member participation and engagement



Clearer communication so you know what matters—and why



Enable continuous action and supports for advocacy



Leverage technology to support a learning ecosystem

OPEN Meetings: Where you can participate



General OPEN Events

OPEN House (Quarterly): to engage members in OPEN's work, deepen connections, and gather feedback to inform our direction

OPEN Takes (Ad Hoc): to elevate timely ideas and lived expertise with short, TED-style talks on key oral health equity issues



Core Network Events

Hill Day (June): to equip and mobilize members to collectively advocate for oral health equity by sharing stories and priorities directly with Members of Congress.

Annual Meeting (October): to convene the OPEN network for deep learning, connection, and skill-building that strengthens collective capacity for coordinated action on oral health equity.

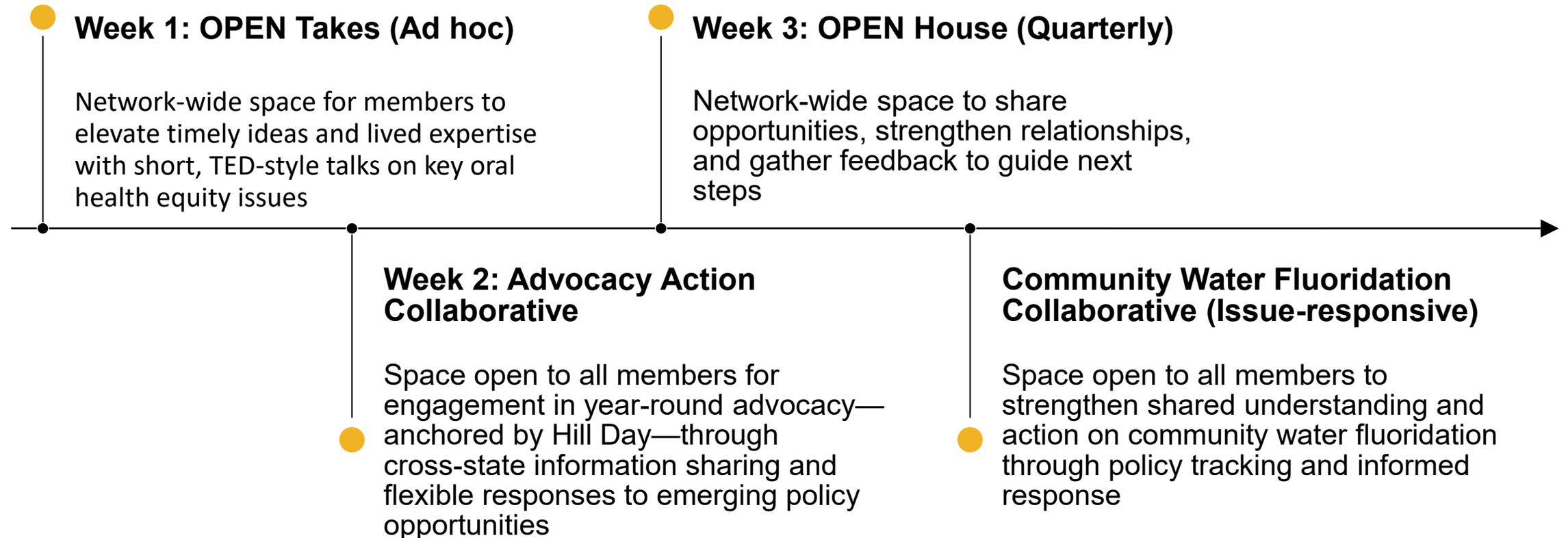


Learning Collaboratives

Advocacy Action (Monthly): to shape OPEN's policy agenda and support sustained advocacy at the federal, state, and community levels through shared strategy, learning, and action.

Community Water Fluoridation (every 3-4 wks): to build shared understanding and coordinated response around community water fluoridation by tracking policy developments and supporting informed action.

A Clearer, Simpler Way to Engage with OPEN in 2026



Key Moments to Connect, Learn, and Act in 2026

**OPEN Hill Day |
Washington, DC
| June 3–4**

Collective advocacy in action

- Mobilize members around a shared policy agenda
- Targeted outreach to key states for deeper representation
- Hybrid options for plenaries
- Registration details coming soon

**OPEN Annual
Meeting | Virtual
| October 20–22**

Collective learning and relationship-building

- Skill-building and shared learning
- Cross-state connection and strategy
- Strengthening capacity for sustained oral health equity work

Hill Day Scholarship Applications

- Hotel and on-site meals will be covered for all 2026 participants
- Regional travel scholarships available (airfare & ground transportation)
- **Application window: Feb. 20 – March 10**
- Limited scholarships will be distributed based on:
 - Interest/number of applications
 - Regional representation
 - Policy priorities, challenges and opportunities
- Questions? Please email open@carequest.org
- **Submit your application today!**

Free Resources You Can Use Throughout the Year

- **Framing for Oral Health Equity Toolkit**
 - Grab and go phrases, legislative testimony templates, reframe guides, and more
- **Community Water Fluoridation: Proven, Safe, and Essential for Oral Health**
 - One-pager with health and cost-saving data to protect community water fluoridation
- **Technical Assistance from FrameWorks**
 - OPEN members may access TA hours to help advocate for oral health equity through reviewing drafts, brainstorming messaging, developing local templates, and more
 - Contact Anna Marie Tester to set up your TA session: atrester@frameworksinstitute.org



OPEN Spotlight:

Advocacy Committee

Ellen Sugrue Hyman, Committee Lead

Why We Unified Advocacy and Dental Coverage

- Advocacy and dental coverage work are deeply interconnected in today's policy environment
- Members asked for clearer pathways and less fragmentation
- A unified committee allows for stronger strategy, coordination, and follow-through



Advocacy Committee Overview

Engages OPEN members in **meaningful, year-round advocacy**—anchored by Hill Day but extending beyond it—by facilitating **federal-to-state and cross-state information sharing** and maintaining flexibility to respond to evolving policy opportunities and challenges.



2026 Advocacy Cycle

- Medicaid adult dental defense strategy
- Cross-state information sharing
- Monitoring an evolving policy landscape



OPEN Hill Day 2026

- Hill Day planning and training
- Hill Day lessons learned & continued momentum

OPEN's Core Policy Values

Medicaid and Medicare should include comprehensive dental benefits, guaranteeing access to oral healthcare for all beneficiaries.

Every veteran should have access to comprehensive oral healthcare services.

Federal funding through HHS should support robust state oral health programs and infrastructure.

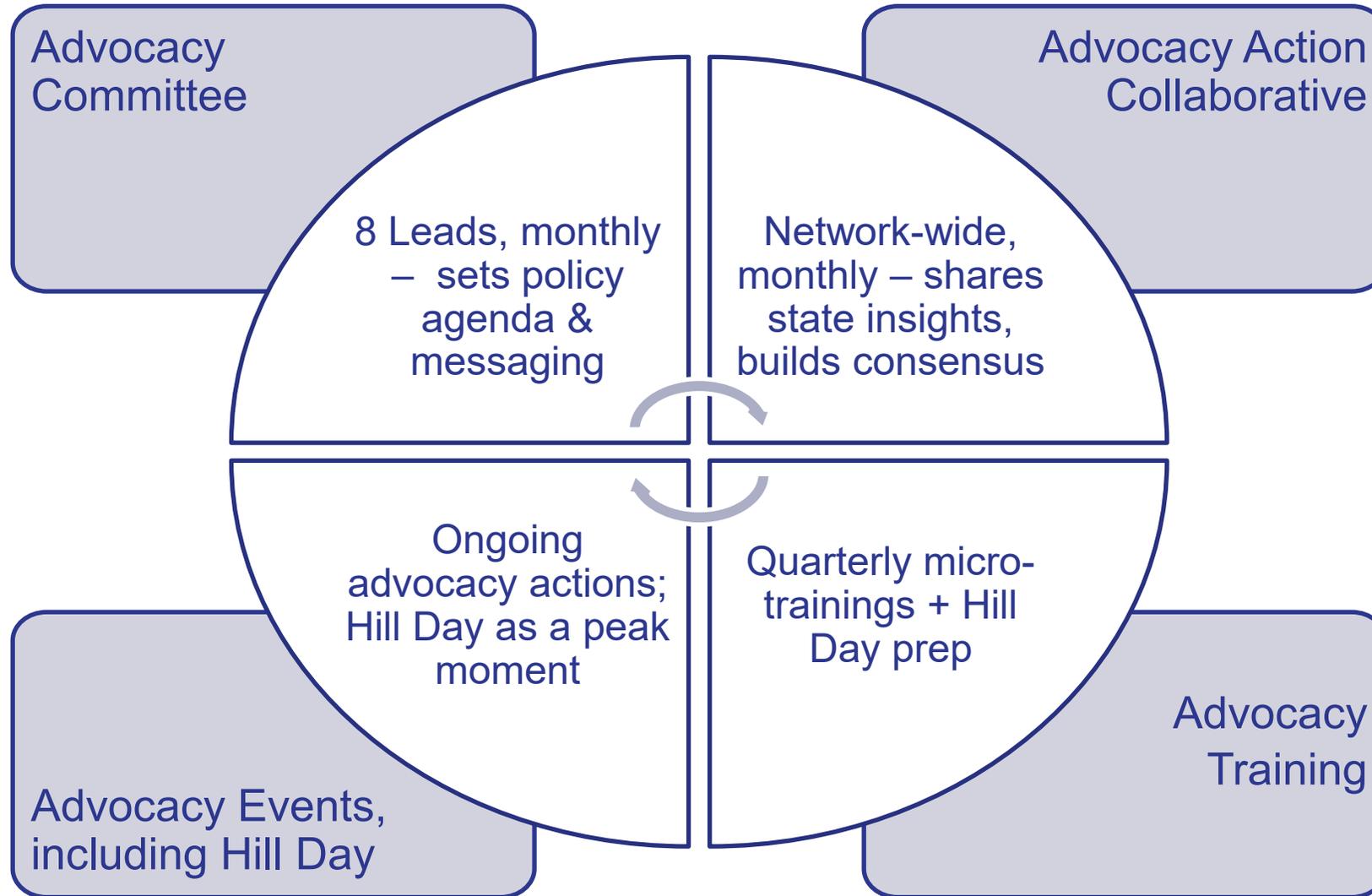
People with disabilities should have access to inclusive and comprehensive oral healthcare.

Public health policies, programs, and systems should include preventive dental care as the foundation for improving oral health outcomes and reducing disparities across communities.

Oral healthcare should be integrated into primary care and public health systems to address the connection between oral health and overall health.

Oral health equity must guide all policy and funding decisions, addressing systemic inequities that disproportionately affect underserved and marginalized communities

OPEN's Continuous Advocacy Cycle



Advocacy Action Collaborative

- **Next Meeting:**
 - Thursday, March 12 @ 2-3pm Eastern
 - *2nd Thursdays Monthly*
- **Collaborative Agenda:**
 - Shaping Hill Day priorities, capacity building needs and cross-state sharing



Call for Formal Leaders

General Application Process

Frances Walsh

What Do Formal Leaders Do?

Purpose: Co-create OPEN's tools, trainings, and strategies to advance equitable oral health systems.

Expectations:

- Attend at least 80% of required Committee meetings to develop network-driven deliverables
- Shape materials (slides, guides, talking points, trainings)
- Take on next steps between meetings
- Elevate state/community perspectives
- Serve as OPEN ambassadors

Success = meaningful contributions, tangible outputs, strengthened capacity across states, and collaborative leadership.

Value Exchange: Leaders bring expertise and effort; OPEN provides resources, platforms, training, stipends, and national connection.

Formal Lead Recruitment

Member Engagement Committee

- Main focus in 2026 will be the launch of a new member portal
- Looking for 1-2 new OPEN members who joined after Oct. 2025



State & Grassroots Committee

- Main focus in 2026 will be cross-state sharing and capacity building
- Looking for state leads from KS and VT



How to Apply

- Application Information and Instructions
(Renewal + New App)
- Deadline: March 15th



2026 OPEN Leadership Application Checklist

About OPEN

The [Oral Health Progress and Equity Network](#) (OPEN) is a national network of individuals and organizations committed to building a future where everyone has access to equitable oral health care. Powered by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, OPEN fosters collective action to eliminate disparities, strengthen systems, and ensure that communities most impacted by inequities are at the center of solutions.

Who Are Formal Leaders?

Formal Leaders are OPEN members who take on added responsibilities for the Network through various Committees, either as a Committee Lead or as a Representative. Formal Leaders support coordinated action across the [network's infrastructure](#) designed to advance systems change and create an oral health system that works for everyone.

Eligibility & Requirements

Individuals and organizations who held an OPEN Formal Leader position in 2025, are eligible to renew their same position in 2026 (updated roles/responsibilities may apply).

- **Returning Leads:** Eligible to renew their 2025 role (with updated responsibilities; based on End of Year Report).
- **New Leads:** Can apply to vacant positions where available.
- **New Representatives:** Can apply to vacant positions within their state.
- **All Leads:**
 - Only one role per person.
 - Multiple applicants from the same organization are allowed if they bring diverse perspectives to needed roles.
 - Must uphold OPEN's JEDI values (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion).

Expectations for Formal Leaders

OPEN Formal Leaders are expected to carry out the Committee-specific responsibilities listed in this document and will be compensated for their time through a stipend. Standard expectations for all roles include:

- Attend ~6 committee meetings/year.
- Join Quarterly OPEN House, Hill Day, and Annual Meeting (in person, if possible).
- Contribute to collective outcomes, share timely feedback, and co-develop next steps.
- Serve as OPEN ambassadors.

Q&A

OPEN Reflections

All

Stay Engaged

Join us in creating a system that is **accessible, equitable, and integrated.**

1 Participate in **Learning Collaboratives**

2 Apply for **Formal Leadership** roles

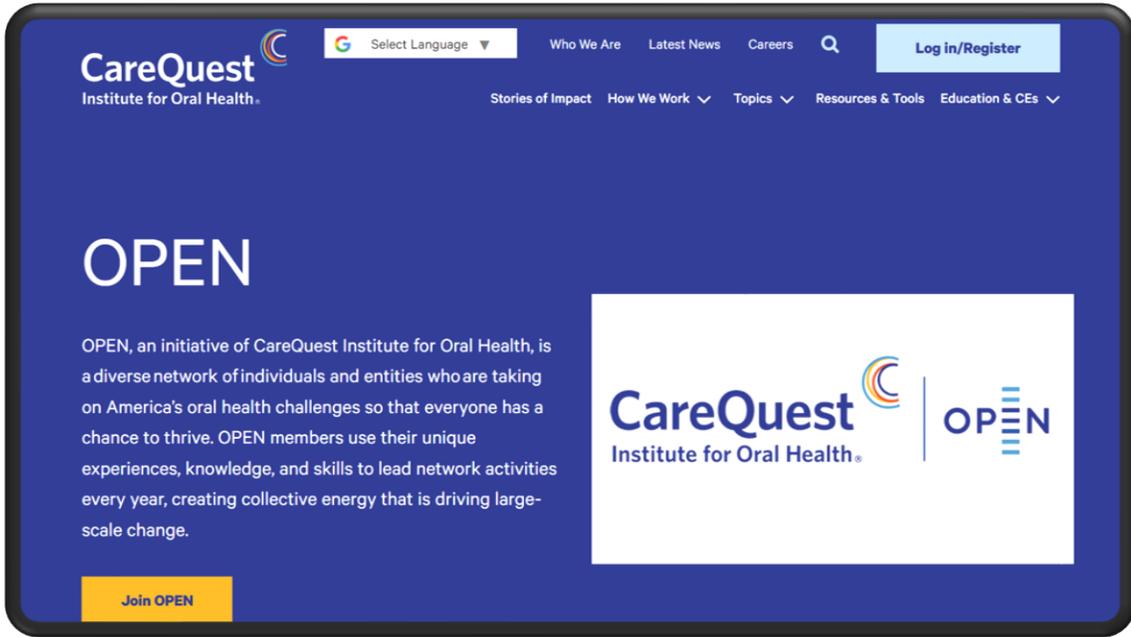
3 Register for **OPEN Hill Day** in June

4 Shape **Advocacy & Policy Action**

5 Help shape **what comes next**

carequest.org/open





Website: carequest.org/open



Scan here
to visit!



Stay connected!

Catch up on past event recordings and register for the exciting ones ahead!

Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time (ET)	Location	Registration Link
Take 60: OPEN 2025 Kick-off	Feb 12	3-4 p.m.	Online	Register
Advocacy Committee Meeting	Feb 20	2-3 p.m.	Online	Register
Dental Coverage Committee Meeting	Feb 28	1-2 p.m.	Online	Register
Take 20: Championing Minimally Invasive Care — Aligning Advocacy to Transform Oral Health	Mar 6	3-3:20 p.m.	Online	Register
Advocacy Committee Meeting	Mar 26	3-4 p.m.	Online	Register
Dental Coverage Committee Meeting	Apr 2	2-3 p.m.	Online	Register
Advocacy Committee Meeting	Apr 16	3-4 p.m.	Online	Register
Hill Day	May 13-14		Washington, DC	Register

OPEN Communities

OPEN, an initiative of CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, is a diverse network of individuals and entities who are taking on America's oral health challenges so that everyone has a chance to thrive. OPEN members use their unique experiences, knowledge, and skills to lead network activities every year, creating collective energy that is driving large-scale change.

Take me to Communities!

Quick Start Guide

Welcome to OPEN Communities!

Communities are virtual spaces where OPEN members connect by sharing content, engaging in discussions, attending OPEN events, and joining in collective action opportunities.

Check out the Navigation Bar at the top of the page and click:

- [About](#) to view member guidance for all things oral health progress and equity.

communities.openoralhealth.org

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