

# The Need for Federal Oral Health Programs



Millions of Americans rely on the CDC's State Promotion of Strategies to Advance Oral Health awards, which fund states' oral health programs. For decades, this infrastructure has enabled the tracking and surveillance of dental disease, informed evidence-based policymaking, supported state and local prevention efforts, and advanced innovative workforce models to expand access to care. It has also helped ensure that oral health remains integrated into broader health care priorities.

## Risks of Cutting Back Oral Health Programs

Without sustained support, there is a real risk of losing critical data, slowing progress on prevention, and widening existing gaps in access and outcomes — ultimately increasing costs and undermining the health of communities nationwide.

Yet this program and oral health representation in federal agencies in general has faced recent setbacks. Recent rollbacks include the elimination of the CDC's Division of Oral Health, which administers these grants, as well as the removal of HRSA's Chief Dental Officer role, reductions in NIH-supported oral health research, and the currently vacant Chief Dental Officer role at CMS. Together, these changes represent a significant loss of federal leadership, coordination, and investment in a field that is foundational to overall health. It has also put our nationwide progress at risk.

## Ensure Oral Health Remains Part of Our Nation's Priorities

As policymakers consider budgetary needs at HHS and its sub-agencies, including the CDC and the new Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), we must ensure that oral health isn't left behind. Improving oral health plays a key role in achieving the agency's broader goals: reducing chronic disease and advancing preventive care.

- Support S.4008, the *Promoting Dental Health Act*, to reauthorize funding for the CDC Oral Health Program for five years, enabling states to continue preventing dental disease, reducing emergency room visits, and strengthening the oral health workforce.

**Improving oral health plays a key role in achieving the agency's broader goals: reducing chronic disease and advancing preventive care.**



**By ensuring oral health is represented in federal agencies, policymakers can better integrate it into chronic disease prevention efforts, improving health outcomes while helping lower long-term health care costs and strengthening the overall health of the nation.**

