Community Water Fluoridation

Marjorie Stocks, Consultant
California Dental Association
California’s Fluoridation Status: Then and Now

**California (1988):**

- Only 16% of Californians on community water systems (CWS) received optimally fluoridated water.
- California ranked 48th in the nation in the percentage of CWS residents who received fluoridated water.

**California (2010):**

- 62% of Californians on CWS received optimally fluoridated water.
- California ranked 37th in the nation in the percentage of CWS residents who received fluoridated water.
Phase 1: *Strategy*

Develop a strategic plan by answering key questions:

- What are the local water systems and how they are governed?
- How have local media covered this issue in recent years? How is future coverage likely to shape the political decision-making?
- Which local stakeholders are willing to join us in taking a stand in support of fluoridation?
- Who should be on our steering committee?

*It’s key: Fully developing your coalition *before* pursuing public action*
Phase 1: *Strategy*

It’s a **local** problem.

- Find the best data to build your case about the pain and cost of dental disease
- Find personal stories that put a real face on this issue
- Seek media coverage of your local dental needs
- Identify the key people who need to hear this and take them to local clinics, hospitals, etc. to see the problem first-hand
Phase 2: Advocacy

• Continue low-key education of local leaders about the need for fluoridation
• Keep the media focused on the “agenda of need”
• Stick to the science and merits of fluoridation
• Reinforce your core messages by identifying spokespersons from diverse communities — seniors, children’s advocates, business community, interfaith coalition, etc.

It’s key: Tell stories – don’t just share facts
Phase 2: *Advocacy*

**Who communicates to whom?**

- This is a crucial question to answer before you begin your advocacy phase.
- Some of your allies have relationships or standing that make them the ideal persons to talk to a key stakeholder.
Phase 3: *Policy-Making*

- Use your coalition to help you ensure that any public hearings are well attended by fluoridation supporters.
- Be very strategic in deciding which persons will testify before the city council or water board.
- Don’t guess the answer to a complicated question — designate a person with scientific or clinical knowledge in your coalition who can be your point-person when public officials or reporters ask these questions.
The Fluoridation Advisory Council: *Putting all of the pieces in place*

- Through this Council, CDA provides public relations, legal and other resources around the state.
- The Council helps with surveillance — so we learn of potential challenges to fluoridation as early as possible.
- We have ongoing collaboration with the ADA so we are aware of national developments, new CDC recommendations, etc.
Refining our strategies to reflect changes in the media

- Websites represent interest groups — which sites should be monitored for dialogue about fluoridation?
- Opponents who blog — how and when do advocates respond?
- Media and online polls — how do they affect opinions of public officials and the public?
- Pew enters the field and starts to shape the media/online landscape
Opponents: Persistent and Web-Savvy

Opponents are aggressively posting web content, courting media coverage and circulating anti-fluoride videos.
What Awaits the Online Public?

[Image of a Google search for fluoride]

1. **Fluoride is Poison**
   - URL: [www.douglasreport.com/fluoride](http://www.douglasreport.com/fluoride)
   - Description: Dr. Bill Douglass explains why he does not recommend fluoride.

2. **Fluoride Action Network**
   - Description: An international coalition seeking to broaden public awareness about the toxicity of fluoride compounds and the health impacts of fluoride.

3. **50 Reasons to Oppose Fluoridation**
   - Description: 50 reasons to oppose fluoride, including that fluoride is not an essential nutrient and no disease has ever been linked to a fluoride deficiency.

Images for fluoride - Report images
Pew's Assessment:
Effective Messages
Using the word “chemical” plays into the fear-based message of anti-fluoride activists.
Takeaway: Frame the issue correctly

This is a winning message wheel for oral health advocates

Healthy Teeth

- Preventing Decay
- Better Overall Health
- Eat and Smile with Dignity
- Seniors Keep Their Teeth
- Better Job Prospects
- Kids Miss Fewer School Days
- Reduce Health Care Costs
- Kids and Adults Avoid Pain
- Eat and Smile with Dignity
- Seniors Keep Their Teeth
- Better Job Prospects
- Kids Miss Fewer School Days
- Reduce Health Care Costs
- Kids and Adults Avoid Pain
- Preventing Decay

www.pewcenteronthestates.com
Takeaway: Frame the issue correctly

Opponents are likely to win if the dialogue is trapped inside this message wheel.
### How messages affect existing support:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Much More</th>
<th>Somewhat More</th>
<th>No Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 35% of children in Oregon have untreated dental disease.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CDC has called fluoridation one of the “ten great public health achievements of the 20th century.”</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies prove that fluoride prevents and can even reverse the process of tooth decay.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities have a moral obligation to ensure that all residents benefit from fluoride — something that is proven to improve oral health.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The typical city saves $38 for every $1 invested in water fluoridation.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Takeaway: Lead with the need**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How messages affect existing support:</th>
<th>Much More</th>
<th>Somewhat More</th>
<th>No Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 35% of children in Oregon have untreated dental disease.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CDC has called fluoridation one of the “ten great public health achievements of the 20th century.”</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies prove that fluoride prevents and can even reverse the process of tooth decay.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities have a moral obligation to ensure that all residents benefit from fluoride — something that is proven to improve oral health.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The typical city saves $38 for every $1 invested in water fluoridation.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Takeaway: Lead with the need

Airing a TV ad in Portland that emphasizes the oral health needs
Takeaway: Start reclaiming the web

iLikeMyTeeth.org frames CWF in the broader context of oral health (protecting teeth)
The Campaign for Dental Health
(iLikeMyTeeth.org)
The Campaign for Dental Health

**Objectives:**

- Create a national network of CWF advocates who can share ideas, offer insights, and support one another
- Improve the quality and accuracy of web content about oral health and CWF
- Provide state and local advocates with fact sheets, PowerPoint slides and other helpful resources to support their work
A sample of campaign partners

A campaign with diverse partners:
The web presence

Allowing advocates to create a locally customized web presence for their CWF campaign
PowerPoint slides for advocates

THE CASE FOR ORAL HEALTH

The Downside of Too Little Fluoride

- All kids are impacted
- Health Implications
- Drained Resources

Our children’s teeth need all the protection they can get in this sugar-coated hyper-competitive world.

Especially younger kids. Without fluoride, they are leading to problems.

Dental issues in some areas are leading to

A Tale of Two Counties

- An evaluation was conducted to determine if the number of claims reimbursed for caries-related procedures for children in the New York State Medicaid program varied by county fluoridation coverage.
- Results showed caries-related procedures were 33.4% higher in the less fluoridated communities.

Fluoride in Europe

Delivered through water, salt and socialized medicine.

The Good News

Our teeth are better than ever.

Then

Now

- 10 World War II recruits had to enlist (<70)
- Americans had lost all their teeth

- Cavities and tooth loss are at an all-time low.
- Only 25% of Americans older than 65 have any teeth, and they have only 10.5 teeth on average.

The Bad News

Many kids, especially poor kids, still suffer


What is Fluorosis?

How Fluoridation Works

CS: F

-ide protects in teeth inside and out.
- by stopping or even reversing decay.
- on tooth enamel – the hard coating for teeth – strong and sold.

EETH ARE GROWING:

- if you drink fluoridated water, fluoride from the surface of the tooth.
- in the structure of the developing enamel
- prevents tooth decay, or cavities.

EETH ARE FORMED:

-ide works with saliva to protect tooth enamel from plaque and sugars
- as tooth enamel repair itself in the of early dental decay

This is fluorosis
Building awareness of the campaign
Launching a rapid-response team

Providing balance to the anti-fluoride opinions that used to dominate online discussions

Want fluoride in Portland water? Put some teeth into it

WombatPDX2
Fluoridating the water IS putting medication in it and is an antiquated idea with many adverse affects. If the Portland City Council succumbs to the pressure of these pro-fluoride coalition members, will they also foot the bill for water purifying systems for every Portland resident who doesn’t want it in their water?

6 Minutes Ago  Reply  Like  Flag

Portland Advocate
Mr. Jones: I am glad to hear of your children's perfect teeth. Please consider that the practices you use to keep teeth perfect might be unavailable to other children and families.

I object to characterizing water fluoridation as "medicating" our water. Such is not the case, and an abundance of state-level Supreme Courts have asserted that water fluoridation is like chlorination - necessary for advancing public health.

1 Hour Ago  Reply  Like  Flag

NorthPortlandParent
Fluoride is not a medication. It is a mineral, and when present at the right level, fluoride in drinking water has two beneficial effects: preventing tooth decay and contributing to healthy bones. (this is a repost from earlier)

1 Hour Ago  Reply  Like  Flag
The campaign’s progress

- More than **350 users** are registered to access advocates-only materials through iLikeMyTeeth.org — a 43% jump since March.

- Local websites have been created by advocates in **7 states**.

- The Campaign provided talking points and other assistance to local advocates in Montana, Florida and Oregon who successfully won local fluoridation votes.

- **540+ Tweets** have been sent since our Twitter account was launched in January.

- The Campaign has more than 30 local, state and national partners.
What NNOHA members can do

1. Join Pew’s Google Group
2. Participate in the Rapid Response Team
3. Post or distribute information about CWF at your clinics or offices
4. Find opportunities to educate stakeholders in your communities about the importance of CWF
5. Establish a training module within NNOHA to ensure that members are effective spokespersons on this issue
Expanding the Dental Workforce

Matt Jacob
Project Manager, Communications
Pew Children’s Dental Campaign
Dental workforce: major challenges

- Nearly **44 million** Americans live in areas that are federally designated as having a dentist shortage.

- In 2008, most dentists in **25 states** did not treat a single Medicaid.

- By 2019, there could be **7,000** fewer dentists practicing in the U.S. compared with the number working in 2009.

Source: HRSA data, August 2012; GAO report, October 2010; and DrBicuspid.com, March 12, 2010.
Dental workforce: major challenges

Percentage of Dentists Age 55+ (2009)


(DC) 37
(MD) 46.4
(CT) 42.8
(RI) 39.2
(DE) 35.9
(NH) 42.6
(VT) 48.7
(NJ) 36
(CT) 42.8
(RI) 39.2
(DE) 35.9
(VT) 48.7
(NH) 42.6

What Medicaid enrollees face

- Only 1 in 4 California dentists accepts Medicaid patients.
- In Missouri, only 11% of dentists participate in Medicaid.
- Only 8% of Florida dentists accept Medicaid enrollees.

ASTDD’s 2009 survey: 
_In 25 of 39 states, most dentists did not treat a single Medicaid reimbursement._

“If you live in the suburbs, if you have a car, plenty of money, dental insurance, and no dental disease, we have the perfect delivery system for you.”

— Charles Bertolami
Dean, New York University
College of Dentistry
The Landscape
Workforce innovations are growing

States that have deployed new types of dental providers or are exploring new workforce models

[Map showing states in green that have deployed new types of dental providers or are exploring new workforce models]
**Nationally:** 76% of Americans supported training MLPs to provide preventive, routine dental care to underserved people.

**Maine:** 78% of residents favored licensing a mid-level provider to help address the state’s unmet oral health needs.

Leading health authorities support new models of the dental workforce:

- **The Institute of Medicine** called new workforce models in dental care “one part of a complex solution to improving oral health care.”

- **The American Public Health Association** took a position to “strongly support DHAT and other innovative and effective programs” to reach the underserved.
Support voiced by NNOHA

• **Policy statement (2011):** “NNOHA supports new types of dental providers working in partnership and collaboration with dentists and other health care providers.”

• **Survey (2012):** 62% of NNOHA members surveyed said they would be willing to hire a new midlevel dental provider if their states authorized such a practitioner.

• **Legislative support (2012):** NNOHA submitted a letter in support of a California bill for a pilot program to test mid-levels.

SOURCES: NNOHA Policy Statement (October 2011); NNOHA survey (March-April 2012).
Expanding the Dental Workforce: Effective Messages
1. There is strong and growing evidence that mid-level providers offer safe, quality care

Dr. David Nash, Univ. of Kentucky Dental Professor (2012):

“There is no question that dental therapists provide care for children that is high quality and safe. None of the 1,100 documents reviewed found any evidence of compromises to children's safety or quality of care.”

2. Raising Medicaid rates would help, but not enough.

Of the states with the five best Medicaid reimbursement rates in 2010:

- None of them provided even **50%** of children with a dental service that year.
- Only 1 of the 5 states exceeded a dental utilization rate of **45%** for children.
Let the evidence drive your message

3. New dental schools will not solve the access problem

- Yes, we need more dentists. But it takes a considerable length of time to produce new dentists.

- The key question is where will they set up their practices and whom will they serve? More dentists won’t ensure more access.
Let the evidence drive your message

4. New providers will work under the general supervision of dentists and be integrated into the dental team.

- New types of providers are not a replacement for dentists. They are a way to strengthen the dental team by adding a practitioner who can offer preventive and restorative procedures.

- They will not be a source of “competition” for private-practice dentists.
ADA’s study on financial viability

• Based on flawed assumptions about mid-level providers (MLPs):
  – Assumed full-time MLPs would work in a single setting
  – Did not calculate cost savings to the community from reducing dental ER visits
  – Failed to include additional revenue that would flow from dentists being freed to perform more specialized procedures
  – Assumed that 100% of educational costs for MLPs would be paid for by loans

• Despite these assumptions, the Alaska model of dental therapists proved to be financially viable in 4 of the 5 states tested

• Minnesota experience shows an MLP is among the most economically productive providers

Source: Pew analysis of the ADA’s study, July 2012.
What NNOHA members can do

1. Join Pew’s Google Group
2. Agree to serve as a pilot site for MLPs to work
3. Educate others about the access problem in your state or community — sharing your first-hand observations
Keep informed…

of these and other oral health issues by receiving Pew's monthly e-newsletter — *Dental News & Views*.

Send an email to mjacob@pewtrusts.org with the words “Subscribe” in the subject line.