Building Collaborative Partnerships to Move Public Policy

NNOHA Oral Health Policy Summit 2010

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Healthcare Management Strategies
Collaboration, Partnership & Public Policy: What is the relationship?
Collaborative Partnerships

- Political Parties
- Unions
- Professional Associations
- Social Interest Groups
Collaborative Partnerships

- National
- State
- Regional
- Local
- Ongoing vs. temporary
What do we know about how the public thinks about oral health?
Oral health is not well understood.

Viewed principally as a cosmetic issue.

Poor oral health is a consequence of “bad parenting”.

Good oral health is best achieved through individual behavior, i.e., brushing and flossing.
Poor oral health has no consequences, no perceived connection to overall health.

Dental visits seen as expendable luxury.

Dentists seen as self-interested, not credible advocates.

No automatic connection to public policy.
Communicate about the importance of oral health to overall health.
Define oral health as a public health issue.
Emphasize the link between public health and public policy.
Engage a wide range of stakeholders in advocacy for oral health.
Why Collaborate?
The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
But seriously...

- More can be accomplished working together than by working alone.
- There is greater access to knowledge and expertise.
- Working together increases power, reach and visibility.
- Resources can be maximized.
Working in Coalition

“A temporary alliance of distinct parties, persons, or states for joint action”

Webster’s Dictionary
Coalitions offer:

- Added credibility.
- Public perception of broad community support.
- Media attention and public profile.
- Increased access to policy makers.
- Networking and partnership opportunities.
- Economies of scale.
- Division of labor.
- Feeling of belonging to something greater than the sum of its parts.

Janice Forsythe, Former Executive Director, Canadian Council on Smoking and Health
How Do We Build Collaboration?

- Identify who cares or should care.
- Communicate why it matters.
- Determine what we’re seeking to accomplish.
- Create consensus on the agenda.
- Assign responsibilities.
- Follow through.
What Will It Take To Get The Work Done?

- Define the [policy] agenda.
- Determine the appropriate partners.
- Identify the resources needed to get the job done.
- Build leadership, structure.
- Develop a communications strategy.
How Do We Engage Partners?

- Listen to needs and priorities.
- Solicit input.
- Develop clear communications.
- Build consensus.
- Solicit and accept feedback.
Who Do We Need At The Table?

- Who are the obvious suspects?
- Who will help us broaden our reach?
- Who is willing to commit to the work?
- Who will contribute necessary resources?
- Who brings leadership?

Choose carefully!
What Does It Take To Realize Success?

- A credible convener.
- Broad based group of supporters/advocates.
- Long and short term plan.
- Consensus on policy position.
- Messaging discipline and creativity.
- Commitment to long-term goals.
If a camel is a horse that was created by committee, what does a coalition create?
An Octopus?

Embrace

Reach

Tenacity
Collaboration

- Embrace your allies
- Reach wider and farther
- Commit to long-term, lasting social change
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