



Good oral health protects our ability to eat, work, grow, learn, and thrive. As the gateway to the body, our mouth is as important as the rest of us; what happens in it moves through the rest of our bodies and lives. Children who are experiencing pain from dental infections are unable to concentrate in class, are absent more often, and do worse in school than their peers. Adults with diabetes and/or heart disease who have gum disease with no dental benefits and access to care and information, often have worse problems from their illness. We all are impacted by the costs, trauma to families, and the impact on work and school that poor oral health causes. By supporting systems that hold oral health as essential to overall health and well-being, our communities are strengthened. From early childhood, through our final years, access to good oral health is a matter of justice — we must ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to live a fully healthy life.

ORAL HEALTH, HEALTH EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

It is both a bedrock principle and an aspiration in our country that every person have the same opportunity to reach their highest potential. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Today, a person's race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, neighborhood and state, have more

to do with whether that person can lead a healthy and full life than any other factors. The passage of the Affordable Care Act raised awareness that healthcare needs to be a fundamental right for all Americans. It is time to see that promise fulfilled. A person's ability to thrive should not be determined by their zip code.

SYSTEMS THINKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Over the last decade a national movement has emerged from a nationwide conversation that included policymakers, providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers. The result of this conversation is an acknowledgment that the system of healthcare we have in place today is not working for everyone's overall health and well-being, and that it's time to work together to build a new future. Together, we have defined a set of goals, with specific and measurable targets to hit by the year 2020 and they are guiding the work of the movement.



ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

The Oral Health Progress and Equity Network, OPEN, is a national network of individuals and organizations that believe oral health is essential to overall health and well-being and is organizing across the country to ensure that fact is widely understood and embraced. By focusing on early access and prevention for children, care and coverage across the lifespan, ensuring that oral health is integrated into our overall healthcare, and creating a new social norm for what it means to be healthy, we are building an environment in which all individuals can thrive.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

Join the diverse network of individuals and organizations at the local, state, and national level to ensure policy, financing, care and the community are aligned to promote oral health as an essential part of overall health and well-being. Here's how:

- Connect with a network member in your community or state
- Register for our virtual community at www.oralhealth.network
- Join us at our next meeting

Members of OPEN are linked together through relationships built on trust, communication and shared values. We connect with one another across the country every day; we learn from one another and share and distribute resources to advance network goals. We convene in person multiple times a year to strengthen our connections. The diversity of experiences, knowledge and skills of network members, coupled with a shared vision and purpose, create the opportunity for greater collective impact. Only by working together in this way can we shape a world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy.

Individually, we can make progress; together we transform the world! OPEN is putting the power for change back in the hands of people who share the same set of beliefs about every person's right to a healthy life.
