



SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ORAL HEALTH EQUITY

The OPEN Network has prioritized oral health equity—the attainment of the highest level of health for all people—as a matter of social justice. Achieving oral health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, the elimination of disparities, and the assurance of the structural and personal conditions needed to support optimal health for all people (adapted from Healthy People 2020 and Dr. Camara Jones). By 2020, we expect to see movement towards social justice as a result of our work.

We can eliminate significant disparities in oral health across race and ethnicity, gender, geography, education level, and income. Oral health outcomes are often worse among people of color, people who live in more rural areas, and people experiencing poverty. For example, less than 1 out of every three Hispanic or Latino persons has visited the dentist in the past year, compared with about half of all white non-Hispanics. Groups of blacks, non-Hispanics, and Mexican Americans also experience tooth decay twice as much as white, non-Hispanics. These disparities show us the opportunities to improve the current system of oral health.

More importantly, by eliminating health disparities, we can strengthen our communities through a focus on improving the underlying causes of these disparities. We believe that health equity is a key component of the broader social justice movement and that both topics are very complex

Members in the OPEN Network regularly engage in learning from groups across the country working on social justice and health equity. This has been beneficial for members to identify challenges, opportunities, and skills that might help move their own work forward alongside the work of improving oral health. For example, members learn about oral health data disaggregation among key socioeconomic groups, about culturally competent approaches to oral health, and about thoughtful public policy ideas that may reduce health disparities. More importantly, we recognize that our diversity is our strength. We have many members who come from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and additionally, we want to invite those who might not be currently working in oral health but care about improving their community to find common purpose with the OPEN Network. Together, we can make sure that everyone in our country attains the highest level of oral health.



THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN!

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

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 wellbeing.

Here's how:

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

Members of the Oral Health 2020 Network 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 oral health network goals. We convene as a group 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 world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy.

Individually, we can make progress; together we transform the world! The OPEN Network 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.
