

# American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Oral Health (SOOH) Advocacy Tool Kit 2018

*For pediatricians, dental professionals, and AAP Chapters*

Early childhood dental caries is the most common chronic disease of childhood, yet access to oral health care continues to be a problem for many children and families. There are many ways for pediatricians and dental professionals to improve oral health access by advocating for kids' oral health in their practice, community, and at the state and federal levels.

Included in this toolkit you will find ideas and tools to engage as an oral health advocate or to simply help you weave oral health into your existing advocacy efforts.

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## AREAS OF FOCUS

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### Children's Oral Health

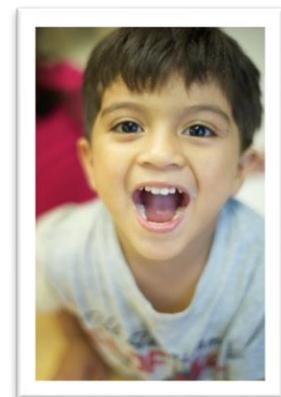
Prevention of dental disease is the key to improving children's oral health. There are many ways in which prevention can be attained including educating children and families about good nutrition and how to keep their mouths healthy, educating pediatricians and other health professionals to pay attention to oral health, school programs that provide dental sealants and educate students, fluoride use and more.

**ACT!** - Use the AAP program [Brush, Book, Bed](#) to help families with young children understand the importance of a nighttime routine that includes toothbrushing. Get out in the media, in schools, scouting groups, prenatal/parenting classes, etc and educate others as much as you can about how to prevent dental disease before it starts!

### Oral Health and Overall Health

Having good oral health doesn't only mean having healthy teeth. Many diseases, including diabetes, some autoimmune system disorders, cancer, and others present themselves in the mouth, before symptoms are noticed elsewhere. In addition, some conditions may impact the oral health of a person who is battling the disease and their medical and dental providers need to work together to address their oral health needs. This may include asthma or allergies, therapies to treat cancer, and even pregnancy.

Because oral health overlaps with so many other health issues, the AAP SOOH and the Campaign for Dental Health (CDH) have been working to make sure that oral health is part of the conversation in their work. This includes collaboration with groups that focus on environmental health, tobacco cessation, obesity and nutrition, breastfeeding, access to healthcare,



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diabetes prevention and care, school health, poverty and social determinants of health, prenatal care, and more.

**ACT!** - Think about how you, as a pediatrician or dental professional, can find connections between your oral health agenda and the agenda of others who are advocating for issues that affect total health, and plug in!

### Access to Oral Health Care

Many children who are covered by Medicaid may have difficulty finding a dental professional who can see them. There are lots of ways in which dental organizations and other oral health advocates are choosing to address this problem including school-based programs, new dental providers, and educating existing dental professionals about seeing patients in need. The AAP has focused on training primary care providers to help ensure that all children who see a pediatrician are able to get preventive oral health care, including counseling, anticipatory guidance, and fluoride varnish application.

**ACT!** - Consider your community and what approach to access to dental care issues could be used to help children and advocate.

### Oral Health Education in Health Professional Training

All health professionals need to learn about oral health and be trained on how to screen, assess caries risk, provide fluoride as needed, and refer to a dental professional. This education should be a part of health professions school's curriculum and competencies as well as residency training. Pediatricians who work in educational settings can advocate for stronger oral health curricula and the need for more interprofessional training to assure that medical and dental professions are trained side by side and are comfortable working together when they graduate.

**ACT!** - Contact your local health professions training programs and ask what kind of oral health training their students/residents receive. Consider offering to use Academy resources or other trainings to present at a grand rounds, during a class, or help organize interprofessional experiences for these students to make sure medical and dental professionals learn and work together.

### Community Water Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation (CWF), the practice of adjusting the level of fluoride in a water system, is one of the most evidence-based and effective ways to prevent dental disease in children and their families. It is crucial that children have access to water with fluoride and that their families understand the importance of drinking it. Pediatricians and dental professionals can advocate for water fluoridation when it is challenged and work to put new systems in place where they do not currently exist.



**ACT!** - If your community does not have a water fluoridation program consider advocating for the addition of one. If a community water fluoridation roll-back attempt happens in your community, you can help by connecting with experts and working with local advocates. Access trusted resources and counsel on this topic from the [Campaign for Dental Health](#) website or email [fluoride@aap.org](mailto:fluoride@aap.org).

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## State and Federal Advocacy

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide dental benefits to 43 million children from economically vulnerable families. These kids are most likely to have tooth decay, yet only 55% of them have annual dental visit. CHIP was recently extended for six years, which is good news for children's oral health, but threats to Medicaid continue. All pediatricians and dental professionals should continue to monitor the latest updates on Capitol Hill and advocate for both programs to continue providing the oral health care children need.

**ACT!** - Stay connected to [AAP Federal Advocacy](#) efforts by becoming a Key Contact so you are alerted when there is a need for advocacy on programs relevant to children's oral health care, and visit [www.aap.org/stateadvocacy](http://www.aap.org/stateadvocacy) for the latest information on state policy updates related to children's oral health care. The [Children's Dental Health Project](#) and the [Dentaquest Foundation Oral Health 2020](#) also keep a pulse on advocacy needs at the federal, state, and local levels. Consider connecting with these two organizations to stay abreast of oral health specific advocacy issues.

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## ONGOING SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY

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### Campaign for Dental Health StandforSmiles

**Date:** Ongoing | **Time:** All Day!

**Hashtags:** #StandforSmiles and #ILikeMyTeeth

**Host Organization:** American Academy of Pediatrics  
Campaign for Dental Health

#StandforSmiles – we need everyone to care about oral health and advocate at every opportunity. In 2018 we are asking you to tweet about how you advocate for children's oral health to families, communities, schools, legislators, and others, using the hashtag #StandforSmiles. Participate or follow along with the American Academy of Pediatrics ([@AmerAcadPeds](#)) and the Campaign for Dental Health ([@ILikeMyTeeth](#)).



#### Sample Tweets

We #StandforSmiles by making sure pediatricians can help families prevent tooth decay  
<http://ow.ly/tvdR30hT45A> #preventdecay

Do you know how to #StandforSmiles at your medical practice? Learn about oral health -  
<http://ow.ly/bxJ230hT47H>

Help more pediatric dentists #StandforSmiles and see children on Medicaid.  
<http://ow.ly/ENGJ30hT4a6>

#StandforSmiles and ask: Are your kids covered? Learn more about Medicaid Coverage for Essential Oral Health Benefits: <http://ow.ly/MybN30hT4bE>

Disadvantaged kids need you to #StandforSmiles. Only ~40% of children on Medicaid get a dental visit. Help them get to a dentist by visiting [insurekidsnow.gov](http://insurekidsnow.gov).

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Pediatricians get help to #StandforSmiles by joining @AmerAcadPeds' Section on Oral Health  
<http://ow.ly/mFFA30hT4cW>

Let's do our part for a healthy start for all children by supporting community water #fluoridation.  
<http://ow.ly/lwmV3056TN8> #StandforSmiles #HealthyCommunities

Water fluoridation is critically important. Tooth decay affects > 90% of Americans by adulthood.  
#StandforSmiles #Ilikemyteeth [www.ilikemyteeth.org](http://www.ilikemyteeth.org)

No dentist? Ask your child's school if they have a school-based dental sealant program.  
#StandforSmiles #Vitalsigns <http://ow.ly/Xybs305jt7z>

#OralHealth affects overall health. Make sure children brush #2min2x, floss, & drink water with fluoride!  
#StandforSmiles [www.ilikemyteeth.org](http://www.ilikemyteeth.org)

Good oral health habits start at home. Teach kids to brush, floss & drink plenty of water w/ #fluoride!  
#StandforSmiles [www.ilikemyteeth.org](http://www.ilikemyteeth.org)

Everyone deserves good #dentalhealth! Healthy mouths begin with community water fluoridation.  
[www.ilikemyteeth.org](http://www.ilikemyteeth.org) #Ilikemyteeth #StandforSmiles

Early literacy and good oral health belong in every child's life. <http://ow.ly/4mUvkU> #StandforSmiles  
#BrushBookBed

The @AmerAcadPeds boasts "Adding #fluoride to water benefits everyone" (not just kids)  
<http://ow.ly/wfMg30hT4Nc> #Ilikemyteeth #StandforSmiles

Dentist: "No child should have to endure decay where a fluoridated water supply could have strengthened her teeth"  
<http://ow.ly/Htxs30hT4n9> #StandforSmiles #Ilikemyteeth

Dr Alejandra Valencia is one of many health professionals who supports community water fluoridation  
<http://ow.ly/cUjS30hT4Pc> #LatinoHealth #StandforSmiles #Ilikemyteeth

Oral health equity begins with fluoridation: Great posters to download and use in your health setting:  
<http://ow.ly/GaAo30hT4SK> #Ilikemyteeth

Dr Francisco Ramos-Gómez of UCLA: Children should regularly drink #fluoridated water  
<http://ow.ly/P56G30hT4Uo> #LatinoHealth #StandforSmiles

3 FREE shareable posters and images encourage families to instill good oral health habits:  
<http://ow.ly/Yqjh30hT4Wf> #Ilikemyteeth #StandforSmiles

Use the Campaign for Dental Health "I Like My Teeth" website en español to educate Spanish-speaking families! Check it out: <http://ow.ly/Rgle30hT500> #LatinoHealth #StandforSmiles

Show how fluoridation helps your community and learn how to "Fight a Rollback:" #Ilikemyteeth  
#StandforSmiles <http://ow.ly/9K7K30hT527>

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### CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

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Please consider reaching out directly to your federal legislators to build a relationship with the office and explain the importance of oral health with children's health care. Your legislators may not know about this issue and how it relates in his or her district or state unless they hear from you. Calling your legislator's office is the most immediate way to contact your legislator—compared to social media, contact form on their website, or snail mail.

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To find your senators, go to [www.Senate.gov](http://www.Senate.gov) and “Find Your Senators” in the upper left-hand corner. To find your representative, go to <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and enter your zip code in the field. Their official .gov websites will have their DC Office contact information. A staff assistant or intern will answer the phone. Every day they summarize the calls in a report to the legislators, so make sure to clear and direct about what issue you’re calling about so your call will be included. Also, be clear that you are a constituent by naming the city you live in or zip code. If you are calling about a specific piece of legislation, be clear on why you support or oppose certain legislation.



Many times, offices note if a caller is of a certain profession that relates to the issue, so be sure to mention that you are a pediatrician or dental professional who lives in the legislator’s district. As an issue expert and constituent, it is important to introduce yourself as a resource for your legislators.

### ***Constituency matters!***

*Only call senators and representatives from the state and district where you live and vote.*

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## ADVOCATING THROUGH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

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*Consider writing an op-ed for a newspaper or a blog post for a site and don’t overlook local outlets. Also think about if you would be interested in being on TV or the Radio to talk about oral health. You could plan to address any of the Areas of Focus explained above or something else that you have identified as a need in your community.*

### **Campaign for Dental Health Blog Posts**

The AAP Campaign for Dental Health writes [blog posts](#) on a variety of oral health topics related to community water fluoridation, oral health news, social determinants of health and health equity, and more. If you are interested in writing a blog post for the Campaign, please email [fluoride@aap.org](mailto:fluoride@aap.org).

### **Council on Communications and Media**

The AAP Council on Communications and Media aims to be a resource for pediatricians who work in the media, as print, on-line, or broadcast journalists, and/or care about the effects of media on child and adolescent health and development. The Council has many resources that can help you as you begin to work with the media. If you are interested this kind of work use the [AAP Media Training 101 YouTube Videos](#) and consider joining the Council.

### **Links to Share as an AAP Section on Oral Health Member**

#### **My Health Matters Article**

- [Why we should care about kids’ teeth - David Hilden, MD, MPH](#)

#### **AAP Videos**

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- [How Much Juice Should Children Drink? The American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines – Patricia Braun, MD, FAAP](#)

### Healthychildren.org Ask the Pediatrician Article

- [How do I get my preschooler to let me brush her teeth? - J. Shahangian, DDS, MS](#)

### AAP Voices Blog Posts on Oral Health

- [Why Oral Health Should Be a Primary Concern for Pediatricians - Brittany Bruggeman, MD](#)
- [Pediatricians are the First Line of Defense for Children's Oral Health - Qadira Huff, MD, MPH](#)

### Protect Tiny Teeth Toolkit

- [Includes videos, social media content, and other resources to educate the public about oral health and pregnancy.](#)

### Campaign for Dental Health

- [Learn and Share Page](#)
- [“From the Front Line” Blog](#)

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## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

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### American Academy of Pediatrics

- [AAP Oral Health Initiatives Website](#)
- [AAP Section on Oral Health Website](#)
- [AAP Policy Statements/Clinical Reports](#)
- [Campaign for Dental Health](#)
- [HealthyChildren.org Oral Health Articles](#)
- [AAP Advocacy and Policy Website](#)
- [AAP Section on Pediatric Trainees Advocacy Webpage](#)



### American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

- [AAPD Home Page](#)
- [AAPD Oral Health Policies, Recommendations and Guidelines](#)
- [Pediatric Oral Health Research and Policy Center](#)
- [AAPD Family Site: My Children's Teeth](#)

### American Dental Association

- [National Children's Dental Health Month Resources](#)
- [ADA Home Page](#)
- [Mouthhealthy.org](#)

### American Dental Hygienists' Association

- [ADHA Home Page](#)

### Children's Dental Health Project

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- [Children's Dental Health Project Website](#)

### **Families USA**

- [Oral Health for All](#)

### **Oral Health for All 2020**

- [OH 2020 Network Website](#)