Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County Strategic Plan 2017-2020

2018 REPORT CARD

When Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County (OHASCC) was formed in 2016, we felt a sense of urgency about addressing one of the most significant—and hidden—health issues in our county. We still feel that way, especially because the most recent data available continue to show major gaps in access to care.

In our first report card, we also want to highlight areas where we have made progress. With continued engagement from our dedicated partners, an infusion of new state funding for oral health care from Prop 56, and plans to keep up the work with kids and adults alike, we look forward to being able to report even more progress in the future.

The Bottom Line:

We're making progress—but we still have gaps in access to dental care.

Sepideh Taghvaei, DDS
Chief Dental Officer
Dientes Community Dental Care

Zach Friend
Supervisor
Santa Cruz County

Co-chairs, OHASCC

Oral Health Access
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Goal 1: Launch a First Tooth First Birthday Education Campaign to Reach New Parents (and Their Health Care Providers)

National health organizations agree: children should visit the dentist by their first birthday or by the time their first tooth arrives. Yet many parents (and even some pediatricians and dentists) may not be aware of this recommendation. OHASCC is working to change this.

Outreach to Parents and Providers

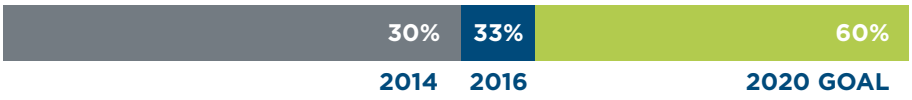
Thanks to Central California Alliance For Health and First 5

106,000 → *Medi-Cal recipients in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Merced counties*

2,168 → *Health care providers*

2,044 → *Santa Cruz County newborns and their families*

It Adds Up! Rise in Medi-Cal utilization rates for kids ages 0-3!



"Parents are now hearing the message that dental care is a healthy habit that starts in the first year and pays off for a lifetime."

— **David Brody,** First 5 Santa Cruz County

Goal 2: Promote Kindergarten Oral Health Screenings

"Visiting a dentist before starting school allows our students to concentrate on learning, playing, and discovering."

— **Michael Watkins,** Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools

The number of children in Santa Cruz County who have never been to the dentist has been cut in half, to 15.3%! Even so, almost a quarter of Santa Cruz County children show signs of untreated dental decay when they do see a dentist.

50%↓

Number of kids who have never been to the dentist!

To encourage parents to bring their children to the dentist, school enrollment packets now include forms to be filled out by a dental provider. To accommodate families who don't already have a dentist or can't afford one, Dientes and Salud committed to opening appointments for kids before school starts. That's one way to reach our goal of increasing dental visit rates among 4-5 year olds from 49% to 65% by 2020.

3,500 | *Santa Cruz County students who received dental visit forms in their school enrollment packets*

Goal 3: Expand Treatment, Prevention, and Clinical Capacity

Much as we'd like to prevent all dental problems, people of every age will always need regular dental care to detect problems early, treat them, and maintain good oral health. Access to quality dental care is difficult for many individuals and families, especially if their incomes are low.

OHASCC worked on access from three different angles:

A.

Training to make the application of fluoride varnish at well-child visits the standard of care—not the exception —by 2020.

Already, varnish applications for children aged 0-5 by non-dentists have nearly tripled since 2012. Applying fluoride varnish has many advantages: it is quick, painless, easy to learn, easy to incorporate in a medical visit, and is an opportunity to reinforce oral health education. Fluoride reduces tooth decay by 20-40%; receiving regular fluoride varnish is crucial for kids in our County, where our water is not fluoridated.

B.

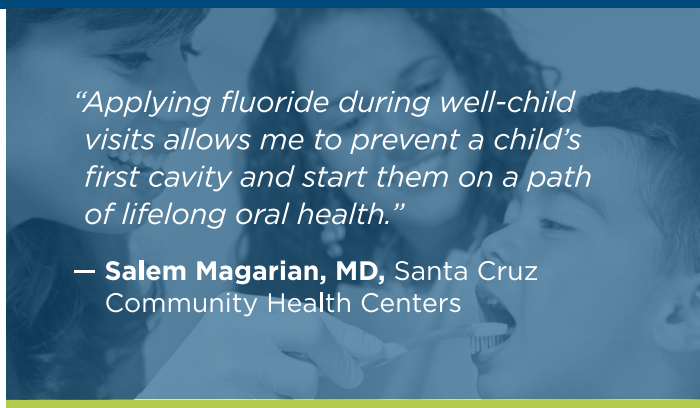
Expanding clinics to increase the number of Santa Cruz County residents with access to quality dental care.

Since 2014, Dientes Community Dental Care has been steadily expanding the numbers of patients and visits at its existing locations. Looking forward, Dientes is addressing the need for care by making a part-time clinic full-time and by opening a new clinic in Live Oak in order to serve 7,000 additional patients a year by 2020.

C.

Recruiting dental providers to serve more patients more efficiently.

Salud Para La Gente hired three new dental hygienists and is sponsoring Extended Function (EF) training for four Registered Dental Assistants (RDAs). These mid-level providers enable a big boost to capacity and more efficient workflows. Salud also launched a virtual dental home project at school-based sites in 2018, giving even more students and families access to needed preventative dental care.



"Applying fluoride during well-child visits allows me to prevent a child's first cavity and start them on a path of lifelong oral health."

— **Salem Magarian, MD,** Santa Cruz Community Health Centers

64

Medical staff trained to apply fluoride varnish by CHDP at well-child visits, keeping hundreds of kids from dental decay

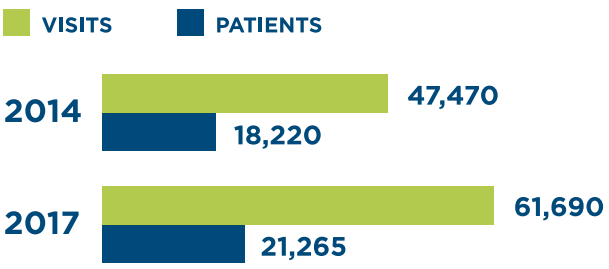
270%

Increase in the number of children aged 0-5 who received fluoride varnish (206 kids in 2012 to 764 in 2016)

"Lack of access to dental providers is a County-wide problem and it's going to take a community-wide effort like this to have an impact."

— **Randolph Cross, DDS,** Salud Para La Gente

30% Growth in Visits
17% Increase in Patients
Dientes and Salud



"Everyone—from all incomes—deserves a healthy smile."

– **Sepideh Taghvaei,** DDS, Dientes Community Dental Care

dientes
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OHA Oral Health Access
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Background

Dental problems are about more than teeth and smiles. They are the leading cause of missed school days. Additionally, poor oral health is associated with diabetes, Alzheimer's, and cardiovascular disease. Untreated gum inflammation can cause damage to blood vessels and the heart. Tooth and mouth pain can interfere with daily life including: healthy eating, clear speech, successful job searches, social connections, and self-confidence.

Nationally, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among 6- to 11-year-old children, even though it is 100% preventable.

In California, one of every three children is affected by tooth decay by third grade.

In Santa Cruz County, the number of people enrolled in Medi-Cal who have gone to the dentist has increased by 20% since 2014. Children are the biggest users of Denti-Cal—a good trend that should persist. At the same time, we continue to reach out to adults and find ways to make oral health care more accessible to people of all ages and incomes.

For more information about the ongoing work of Oral Health Access Santa Cruz County, please visit: oralhealthscc.org

What's Next?

In 2018, OHASCC members will continue to build on this progress bolstered by a $1 million investment in oral health education from the California State Proposition 56 grant. This 5-year grant will support our efforts to:

- **Expand** all three areas of current work.
- **Gather and share** accurate, up-to-date data to guide next steps.
- **Identify** new populations and initiatives that would benefit from a similar focus (e.g., seniors).

"Investments in oral health can pay huge dividends for our community. The work that has begun is already transforming lives, so let's ensure that we continue this commitment!"

– **Zach Friend,** Santa Cruz County Supervisor

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