



2023 Legislative Summary

Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation (DDCOF) supports public policies that advance and promote equity and reduce disparities, particularly for populations that are historically overlooked.

We will work to ensure optimal oral health is not compromised due any social determinant of health, including but not limited to, racism, stigma, lack of access to care, geographic location, access to clean, safe and optimally fluoridated water, income, food insecurity, nutrition, housing and housing insecurity, access to a healthy lifestyle, transportation, and education.

Our highest priority policies acknowledge intersectionality, increase access to care, prioritize prevention and strengthen the understanding of the connection of oral health to overall health for all ages.

By the
numbers

617
bills introduced

486
bills passed

79%
success rate

In the 2023 legislative session we



Actively tracked **39** Colorado bills, **7** federal bills, and the Dental Board rulemaking process.



Represented oral health at **15** stakeholder meetings and on **2** advisory committees.



Provided oral health subject matter expertise for talking points, advocacy letters and public testimony related to policy priority areas.



Provided more than **\$100,000** in funding to policy partners to actively support 2023 legislation and track implementation of previous legislation.



Systems Change and Systems Transformation

We advocate for systems changes and transformations that identify and advance strategies, systems, and policies that enhance and support oral health equity by leveraging systems within and outside of the traditional oral health care system.



PRIORITY

Expanding where oral health promotion and prevention services can be provided, and by who, and promote oral health care as primary care with regard to coverage and payment.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) - an umbrella term for lay public health workers who may go by many names (patient navigators, promotores de salud, connectors) link communities to health and social programs to promote access to services and improve the quality and cultural responsiveness of care delivery.

Evidence shows that CHWs can help improve healthcare access and outcomes, strengthen healthcare teams and enhance quality of life for people in low-income, underserved and diverse communities.¹

Many interventions that integrate CHWs into health care delivery and public health systems are associated with reductions in chronic illnesses, increased patient involvement, improvements in overall community health and reduced healthcare costs.²

DCCOF supported and worked to ensure that oral health providers were included in the list of providers able to employ a community health worker and proud to be an early supporter of SB23-002 and HB23-1244.

SB23-002

Community Health Worker reimbursement authorizes Health Care Policy and Financing to seek federal authorization for Medicaid reimbursement of services provided by a community health worker. **PASSED**

HB23-1244

Regional Health Connector program. Appropriates 1.5 million to the program and requires a third-party administrative entity distribute money to locally based host organizations. **PASSED**



PRIORITY

Support seamless oral health career pathways from school to employment.

Career ladders for the oral health care workforce promote patient centered care and improve workforce diversity, representativeness, and cultural relevance so it is more reflective of the population in Colorado. Priorities in policy support include those that promote advising, scholarships, apprenticeships, stackable credentials, transferability, affordability, and employability.

As in recent years, there were a number of bills proposed to address high-demand jobs and health care workforce shortages. Below are some examples of bills that we identified as relevant to our Workforce Initiative grantees and oral health care workforce in general.

SB23-003

Adult high-school education program creates a pathway for Coloradans who are 21 years of age or older and do not have a high school diploma to attend high school and earn a diploma at no cost. **PASSED**

HB23-1212

Created a 2-year apprenticeship navigator pilot program to increase awareness of registered apprenticeship programs and creates and maintains a web-based job board. **PASSED**

HB23-1246

The "support in-demand career workforce" bill appropriated \$10 million to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for the purpose of recruitment and re-engagement efforts with health-care professionals with licenses and staffing. **PASSED**



Coverage and Financing

Oral health care is primary care and is considered with regard to coverage, access, and payment.

Understanding that coverage and affordability matters when it comes to Coloradans getting the dental care they need,⁴ we support policies that protect, expand and improve existing oral health coverage and benefits while working towards establishing guaranteed coverage for veterans and older adults.

It is in the areas of coverage and financing that we see some of the of the greatest victories of the 2023 legislative session.

Regardless of the reasons, temporary loss of Medicaid coverage, termed churn, creates a number of challenges to achieving optimal oral health including disrupting and delaying treatment and unexpected out-of-pocket costs for patients. [HB23-1300](#) aims to address the problem of churn by requiring the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing seek federal authorization to extend continuous eligibility coverage for children 0-3, including children who would be eligible but are not because of their immigration status.

As part of [SB23-189](#) Colorado codified protection of the [United States Preventive Services Task Force A and B grade](#) recommendations which include the prevention of dental caries ins children younger than 5 years with fluoride varnish application and fluoride supplement prescription by primary care clinicians, and other important services relevant to oral health including screening for pre-diabetes, and tobacco cessation screening of adults and tobacco cessation intervention among school-aged children and adolescents.

Two unexpected successes came through the state budgeting process. [SB23-214](#), also known as the long bill included an across-the-board provider rate increase of 3% and eliminated the \$1,500 cap for adults on Medicaid.

As we continue to build our capacity to monitor, respond to and actively pursue policy that advances oral health equity in Colorado, we will continue to strengthen existing and build new partnerships with others working on this issue. Elevating the awareness of oral health inequities and building relationships, both inside and outside of the oral health system, will be critical to developing a comprehensive strategy that will create systems that work for ALL Coloradans.

For more information, contact us at hello@ddpco.com.



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¹[Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment](#) | Health Affairs

²[State Approaches to Community Health Worker Financing through Medicaid State Plan Amendments](#)

³Colorado Fiscal Institute Child Tax Credit [Fact Sheet](#)

⁴[Ensuring Smiles](#) In Colorado, Insurance Shapes Access to Dental Care. Colorado Health Institute.

⁵ [Noam Levy, Why Black Americans Are More Likely To Be Saddled With Medical Debt](#), NPR (Oct. 27, 2022)