



**Meeting Summary: Delaware Oral Health 2015 Forum**  
**Friday, May 8, 2015**  
**Dover Downs Conference Center**  
**1131 North Dupont Hwy., Dover, DE 19901**

***Advancing oral health across the lifespan in Delaware to meet the needs of children, persons with disabilities and aging adults.***

On May 8, 2015, the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services sponsored the “Oral Health 2015 Forum.” A diverse group of 86 representatives from various health organizations and community agencies attended. The primary focus was on oral health equity, systems of care and oral health literacy. Information and strategies were provided for advancing oral health by both organizations and individuals.

Event participants heard from Delaware Health and Social Services Cabinet Secretary, Rita M. Landgraf, Delaware Division of Public Health Director Dr. Karyl Ratty. They were followed by three nationally-recognized leaders in the fields of dental care and oral health education. During the below presentations, participants had the opportunity to learn about innovative initiatives underway across the country, as well as discuss how those activities could be applied locally:

- **Oral Health Equity: Issues & Challenges for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities – Michael Helgeson**, DDS, Executive Director, Apple Tree Dental; President-Elect, American Society of Geriatric Dentistry; Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota
  - Dr. Helgeson is nationally-recognized for his work to provide dental services for people with disabilities and in long-term care facilities. His presentation overviewed how the issue of oral health equity could be approached for Delaware’s vulnerable and underserved populations. This included the disparities and barriers older adults and persons with disabilities face in obtaining dental care. Dr. Helgeson also shared information about geriatric medicine and the American Dental Association’s efforts to improve oral health in long-term care settings, as well as policies that have been effective in Minnesota and other states. Dr. Helgeson then illustrated how his organization applies a “community collaborative practice” model to create year-round dental homes in partnership with Head Start Centers, schools, group homes and nursing facilities in urban and rural areas. Through mobile dental offices, Dr. Helgeson highlighted how providing care in a familiar setting to those individuals with special needs greatly increases the likelihood that patients receive complete treatment and regular follow up. [Download Dr. Helgeson’s presentation](#)

- **Oral Health Literacy Across the Lifespan – John Welby**, MS, Director, Oral Health Literacy Campaign, Office of Oral Health, Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Maryland Oral Health Coalition
  - John Welby provided an overview of a very successful oral health literacy campaign in Maryland. The effort was implemented in response to the tragic death of 12-year-old Deamonte Driver after bacteria from a severe oral infection reached his brain. The target audience of Mr. Welby’s effort was new and expecting parents, with a focus on high-risk/low socioeconomic status populations. The campaign translated the often complex and clinical topic of oral health into a few simple and understandable key messages. Early success led to an expanded effort to specifically reach Hispanic mothers that yielded great results. When 400 Hispanic mothers were surveyed, 92% were able to recall the main “first dental visit by age one” message.
 

[Download Mr. Welby’s presentation](#)
  
- **Oral Health is a Winnable Battle: A Systems Approach to Achieving Optimal Oral Health – Burton Edelstein**, DDS, MPH, Professor of Dentistry & Health Policy, College of Dental Medicine, Columbia University; Board Chair, Children’s Dental Health Project
  - Dr. Burton Edelstein is widely regarded as one of the pre-eminent dental public health experts in the country. His presentation dissected what it means to take a “systems approach to achieving optimal oral health.” Dr. Edelstein walked attendees through the process of defining what “health” is and what “optimal oral health” means. By working backwards, from outcomes through the progression of achieving those outcomes, the discussion looked at dental care (procedure-focused versus person-focused) and how much health determinants and behavior choices contribute. He shared the work of Murray Thompson, a New Zealand researcher, whose work has shown that environment and socioeconomic status are strong predictors of health outcomes. Dr. Edelstein then conducted a group exercise originally undertaken in 2007 by a multidisciplinary team (sociology, nursing, pediatrics, health education, technology, behavioral health, nutrition) that asks: “What if there was no such thing as dentistry? What would you invent? What resources would you deploy?” Through this exercise Dr. Edelstein highlighted the effectiveness of population-based disease prevention and wellness strategies.

### ***2015 Oral Health Champion Awards***

Following Dr. Edelstein’s keynote presentation, four of Delaware’s oral health leaders were recognized with the Division of Public Health’s annual 2015 Oral Health Champion Awards. This year’s deserving recipients were:

- **Senator Bethany Hall-Long**, PhD, MSN, Senator, Delaware General Assembly; and Faculty, School of Nursing, University of Delaware
- **Renee Kottenhahn**, MD, FAAP, Christiana Care Health System, Associate Director, Pediatric Practice Program
- **Eileen Sparling**, EdM, Director, Center for Disabilities Studies, University of Delaware
- **Rumiko Nelson**, RDH, BS, Division of Public Health Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services

### ***Partnerships in Delaware's Oral Health and Overall Wellbeing***

Due to the significant amount of information and dialogue covered during the morning session, the afternoon program was abbreviated to preserve time for the full community partner panel discussion. As a result, Delaware Division of Public Health Dental Director, Dr. Greg McClure, gave a concentrated presentation on the State's existing alliances, as well as the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services' plans for expanding the network of oral health partners.

[Download Dr. McClure's presentation on Delaware's oral health partnerships.](#)

### ***Call for Content: Delaware's Oral Health Toolkit***

The intended discussion about a planned Oral Health Toolkit resource was postponed due to schedule constraints. At the time, the Toolkit was still in its conceptual stage. As this resource is developed, the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services would like your input on how to make oral health a regular part of your organization's activities.

[Take the 2015 Delaware Oral Health Forum survey and let us know what materials you need.](#)

### ***Community Partner Panel and Open Forum***

The 2015 Delaware Oral Health Forum concluded with a panel discussion comprised of many of the First State's top public health and wellness leaders. Panelists and subject matter included:

- **Moderator: Gary Colangelo, DDS, MG, FAC, Board Chair, Delaware Oral Health Coalition:** Gave an update on Oral Health Coalition activities and facilitated the panel discussion.
- **Senator Bethany Hall-Long, PhD, MSN, Senator, Delaware General Assembly; and Faculty, School of Nursing, University of Delaware:** Provided an overview of pending legislation for adult dental Medicaid coverage and highlighted the challenges associated with providing a much needed dental care safety net for Delaware's pregnant women, adults and persons with disabilities. Meeting participants were delighted to participate in a straw poll and diligently identified their top oral health policy priorities. Commonly cited issues were an adult dental Medicaid benefit, nursing home care and medical/dental collaboration.

- **Curtis Leciejewski, DDS, President, Delaware State Dental Society:** Discussed the participation of Delaware dental professionals in the recent Maryland Eastern Shore Mission of Mercy dental care event. The First State provided 11 dentists, more than 20 dental hygienists and seven dental assistants who volunteered during the two-day event. This year's initiative treated 1,100 patients who could not afford to pay for much needed dental care. Approximately 38% of the people who received treatment at the 2013 Mission of Mercy event were from Delaware. An account was given of the Delaware State Dental Society's efforts to promote care for the underserved populations.
- **Renee Kottenhahn, MD, Christiana Care Health System, Associate Director, Pediatric Practice Program:** Presented her organization's efforts and lessons learned to increase the number of children accessing pediatric dental care through oral health training of pediatric residents, front office staff coordination, dental care referrals and an inter-departmental scheduling initiative. [Download Dr. Kottenhahn's presentation](#)
- **Eileen Sparling, EdM, Director, Center for Disabilities Studies, University of Delaware:** Spoke about the initiatives her organization is implementing to identify and address oral health and overall wellness disparities among persons with disabilities. Also introduced two new University of Delaware reports: [The Plan to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities](#) and [The Current Landscape for Disability and Health in Delaware: Public Health Assessment Report Summary 2015](#)
- **Nancy Brohawn, RDH, BSDH, Delaware Dental Hygienists Association:** Provided an update on recent and upcoming activities related to the Delaware Dental Hygienists Association. Also discussed opportunities regarding hygienist collaboration with Head Start programs, as well as the potential for public health dental hygiene practitioner and dental therapy education credentials and standards.
- **John Sohonage, DDS, La Red Health Center:** Shared the opportunities and challenges facing Federally Qualified Health Center dental clinics. La Red's dental program focuses on preventive care and treatment based on assessed risk for dental disease. By providing prenatal patients with dental exams and anticipatory guidance, as well as 9-month "healthy smile" well-child visits, the clinic stresses the importance of oral health from an early age. Long dental appointment wait times for adults; however, present a challenge for older patients.
- **Dr. Helgeson and John Welby:** The morning's presenters responded to questions and commented on how they have seen similar oral health issues be effectively addressed elsewhere. Both felt that Delaware is well positioned to make significant improvements.
- **Stephen Groff, Director, Delaware Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance:** Unable to participate due to an unforeseen scheduling conflict.

### **Next Steps**

As discussed at the meeting, a lot of good work is underway, but there is still much to do. As we develop new resources, our no cost materials continue to be available to help you advance the oral health work of your organization.

- **Event Feedback:** Your input is essential for enhancing our future resource and event offerings. [Please take just a few minutes to complete our brief survey.](#)
- **Educational Cards:** With simple oral health messages in English and Spanish, these cards are free in any quantity for all outreach purposes. Request prenatal, infant, child, teen, adult or senior cards today: 302-744-4554 / [dhss\\_dph\\_dental@state.de.us](mailto:dhss_dph_dental@state.de.us)).
- **Dental Resource Guide:** Organized by geographic area, this free and easy-to-use dental referral resource is available for connecting individuals with needed dental care. [Download the Dental Resource Guide here](#)
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** To share partnership ideas or learn more about making oral health a regular part of your organization's activities, contact the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services: (302-744-4554 / [dhss\\_dph\\_dental@state.de.us](mailto:dhss_dph_dental@state.de.us)).
- **Learn More:** Download the [Delaware Oral Health Plan 2014: Goals and Objectives](#) to learn more about the First State's vision for advancing oral health across the lifespan.

We greatly appreciate your commitment to the wellbeing of the First State's citizens and look forward to your participation in advancing oral health in Delaware – from preconception to the golden years!

[Please don't forget to take just a few minutes to complete our brief post-event survey.](#)

Sincerely,

Gregory B. McClure, DMD, MPH  
Dental Director  
Delaware Division of Public Health  
Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services