California Fluoridation Manual

California Oral Health
Technical Assistance Center









UCSF

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PERMISSIONS

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DISCLAIMER

This manual provides guidance for local health jurisdictions in California in the promotion of community water fluoridation for oral health based on generally accepted, peer-reviewed, scientific evidence and experience. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the extensive literature on fluoridation and fluorides or to promote professional advice on personal oral health matters. Readers are advised to review the literature themselves, including the sources cited in this manual and information subsequently published, for a complete understanding of the issues involved with fluoridation.

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What is Community Water Fluoridation?

Community water fluoridation (CWF) is the controlled adjustment of the natural fluoride concentration in community water supplies to the concentration recommended for preventing tooth decay.[1] It is a public health intervention undertaken by a community to bring about lasting improvements in the oral health of its residents. Efforts to add fluoride to drinking water supplies require policy, system and environmental changes such as passing laws, regulations and resolutions, creating infrastructure and training, and making structural changes.

The benefits and safety of fluoridation are well-established. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) named community water fluoridation one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.[2] Community water fluoridation is recommended by nearly all public health, medical, and dental organizations. It is recommended by the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, US Public Health Service, and World Health Organization.

Fluoridated water reduces tooth decay in children and adults. Community water fluoridation has been shown to save money both for families and the health care system by reducing tooth decay.

There is robust scientific evidence supporting fluoridation. The Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF) recommends water fluoridation based on strong evidence of effectiveness in reducing tooth decay across populations.[3] The CPSTF is an independent, nonfederal panel of public health and prevention experts whose members represent a broad range of research, practice, and policy expertise in community preventive services, public health, health promotion, and disease prevention. The American Dental Association (ADA), through its National Fluoridation Advisory Committee, reviews the science and other aspects of fluoridation periodically. In 2018, the ADA issued an edition of *Fluoridation Facts* in a Question-and-Answer format, with sections on benefits, safety, fluoridation practice, public policy, and cost.[4]

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have created online training modules on fluoridation.[5]

History of Fluoridation in California

San Francisco was one of the first communities in California to fluoridate its water supply. Approval was given by voters in November 1951 (proposition M) and fluoridation started in 1952. By 1992, 117 California water systems were serving 4.85 million residents with fluoridated water.[6]

The California Fluoridation Act of 1995[7] requires water systems with 10,000 or more service connections to fluoridate their water supply when funding becomes available from a source other than the rate payers or taxpayers.

Further, California law states that it is the intent of the statewide legislation "to preempt local government regulations, ordinances, and initiatives that prohibit or restrict the fluoridation of drinking water."[8]

The Network for Public Health has detailed information on all California statutes and regulations on fluoridation.[9]

Several water districts had previously fluoridated their water supply voluntarily by decisions of the electorate or of local elected representatives. Since the passage of the 1995 fluoridation statute in California, other districts, including the cities of Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego, have voluntarily fluoridated. The largest system to fluoridate in 2007 was the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.[10] A more detailed history of fluoridation has been published, notably in the *Journal of the California Dental Association*.[11]

Section 116410 (a) of the California Health and Safety Code states:

"Each public water system with at least 10,000 service connections and with a natural level of fluorides that is less than the minimum established in the regulations adopted pursuant to this section shall be fluoridated in order to promote the public health of Californians of all ages through the protection and maintenance of dental health, a paramount issue of statewide concern."

Additionally:

"A public water system is not required to fluoridate pursuant to Section 116410, or the regulations adopted thereunder by the department, in any of the following situations: (A) If the public water system is listed on the schedule to implement a fluoridation program pursuant to paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 116410 and funds are not offered pursuant to a binding contractual offer to the public water system sufficient to pay the capital and associated costs from any outside source. As used in this section, "outside source" means a source other than the system's ratepayers, shareholders, local taxpayers, bondholders, or any fees or charges levied by the water system."

How to use this manual

In this manual you will find:

- The process of obtaining fluoridation for communities in the State of California
- The governing processes involved in choosing fluoridation
- Information on making the case for fluoridation in your community

Progressing through the manual, section by section, guides you through the steps of advocating for fluoridation from beginning to result. See the diagram in Appendix A for an overview of this process.

Acronyms

The following acronyms appear in this manual:

- **ADA** American Dental Association
- **CDA** California Dental Association
- **CDC** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **COHTAC** California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center
- **CPUC** California Public Utilities Commission
- **UCSF** University of California San Francisco

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I. Strategy

The process of fluoridating your community's water supply begins with a strategy consisting of the following steps:

- **Assessing the region's water supply**
  - Where does the water come from?
  - How much fluoride is in the water?
  - How is the water system governed?
  - What are the capital costs of initiating fluoridation?
- **Learning the area's fluoridation history**
- **Developing a steering committee or coalition**
  - Prepare for the first meeting
- **Developing a communication plan**
  - Develop a problem statement
  - Develop a facts statement/question and answer sheet
  - Identify spokespersons and draft a sample talk
  - Provide training on the media
  - Work with the media
  - Educate community educators
  - Suggested educational opportunities
- **Defining a project plan**
  - Review the planning documents in Appendix A
  - Meet with your leadership team

Assessing the Region's Water Supply

Start by identifying the geopolitical boundaries of the regional area to be served. There may be one or more water districts within a county or regional area. The California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water (DDW) can be consulted to identify the water districts in your county or areas. DDW divides California into 24 districts, which can be seen with the contact information for each, on the page 7 map.[12]

For your water district, review your water bill to identify the water agency or agencies that supply your drinking water.

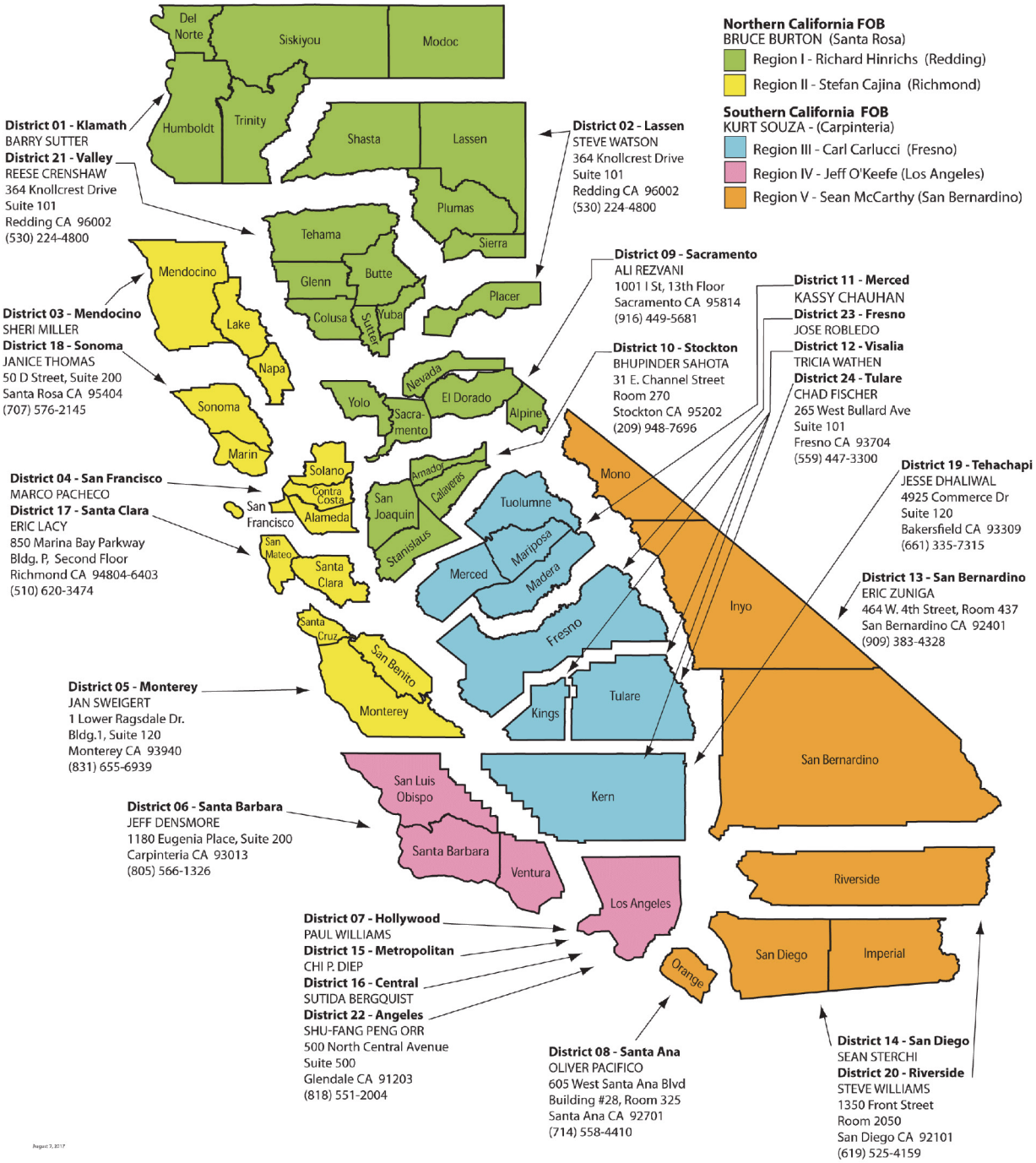
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Where Does the Water Come From?

- What agency supplies the water? Where is the water distributed?
- If the agency is the city, check the public works or utilities section of the bill. Does the city have governance over the municipal water supply?
- Is your community served by a private water company governed by a board of directors? Identify the agency or agencies that treat and distribute the water.
- Does the water system serve more than one community, a neighboring town, or unincorporated area?
- If the community is served by more than one water system, identify the other water systems involved and how they are governed.
- Is your community in a major metropolitan area? If so, a wholesale and retail system might be involved. A wholesale system sells water to retail systems.

DO NOT call the water system directly and ask them how you can fluoridate the water supply. Doing so can set up a difficult conversation. Follow the directions in this document to locate the information you need and share it with your community group. Share information with community members before approaching the water system. The water system governing body will make a decision based on community input.

How Much Fluoride is in the Water?

All water contains some level of naturally occurring fluoride. To find out the amount of fluoride naturally present in your water supply, go to the water agency's website and search for the water quality report or consumer confidence report, which is published annually. Search the report for *fluoride*. The fluoride level is reported as naturally occurring or adjusted, if the water system currently adds fluoride to the water.

The fluoride level in drinking water that is recommended to prevent tooth decay is 0.7 ppm (parts per million) with a control range of 0.6 – 1.0 ppm, which allows water operators a measure of flexibility.[13]

Is the stated average level of fluoride in your water supply within that range? If so, your community already benefits from community water fluoridation or has naturally occurring fluoride in the drinking water at the optimum level for dental health.

How is the Water System Governed?

Public water systems can be municipal or private, that is, investor owned. The process of achieving fluoridation for municipal water systems is different from doing so for private water systems.

- A municipal water system is typically governed by a city council, a board of directors, or a Board of Supervisors who serve as the board of directors for the water system. Expect to communicate with the city council members, the board members, or the general manager and executive staff.
- A private water system requires review by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Expect to communicate with the water system executive staff.

The number of connections in the system or systems determines whether the system is covered by the Fluoridation Act. A system with 10,000 connections or more is subject to the California Fluoridation Act of 1995. Ten thousand connections represent a population of about 40,000 residents.[14]

What are the Capital Costs of Initiating Fluoridation?

It is difficult to estimate capital costs for fluoridation because these costs can vary by region. The costs also fluctuate with changes in the economy. It is helpful to know whether the system consists of treatment plants or wells or a combination of the two. Often, fluoridating a treatment plant can be more cost-effective for the population to be served. Approximate costs of fluoridation are determined when a professional engineering design and estimate are completed. This process is also known as a *fluoridation study*.

In major metropolitan areas, investigating the interrelationships and distribution of the water systems helps to contain costs since both wholesale and retail water systems are frequently involved in the delivery of treated water to a metropolitan area. Engineers and decision-makers often prefer a regional solution to fluoridation.

Assess the local water distribution system serving the community to identify the related upstream and downstream systems. Wholesale distributors or interconnected retail systems can be integrated into the delivery system.

Learning the Area's Fluoridation History

- Has the water system's governing body previously made a decision on fluoridation? Or has there been a previous referendum and vote by the public?
- If the water system is municipal, locate previous board minutes online. To do so, go to the city water system website and search for meetings and council or board minutes to view documentation of discussions about fluoridation.
- If the water system is private, search online for discussions before the CPUC. The CPUC also lists the Consumer Confidence Reports for water districts regulated by the CPUC.[15]
- Search online for articles that document the area's history with fluoridation. Discussion information that is several years old might still be relevant. This earlier information might inform your strategy. One information source is available by subscription at https://www.newspapers.com.
- Research the information you found to identify pro and con elements that might influence a governing body's decision to fluoridate. Does the evidence imply the community's response or the position of an editorial board?

Developing a Steering Committee or Coalition

Your community must own the task of fluoridating the water supply. Broad-based community support is essential to creating local policy in favor of fluoridation. An executive team or steering committee can develop a plan, spearhead advocacy efforts, and monitor results. A steering committee or leadership team can give shape to your coalition, make urgent decisions quickly, and present the community's issues to the media.

To build an effective coalition, consider key influencers in your community. Can you define the leadership structure that would affect a decision on fluoridation? Work with your steering committee to identify the key contacts at state, county, and local agencies and organizations that might support your effort and contribute expertise and leadership. These include the following:

- University of California San Francisco - California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center (COHTAC).[16]
- State and local dental[17] and medical[18] societies
- State[19] and local[20] health departments
- Chambers of commerce[21]
- School districts[22]
- Water agencies[23]
- Children's organizations[24]
- Senior citizen groups[25]
- Neighborhood associations
- Labor unions
- Faith-based organizations
- Other relevant community-based organizations
- Funding agencies
- Parent organizations

The California Dental Association (CDA) has played an important historical role in promoting fluoridation and continues its leadership role. The CDA should be contacted[26] whenever the local community becomes interested in water fluoridation in California in order to initiate or maintain fluoridation. To reach CDA, contact the local dental society office. The CDA website provides a search tool to obtain local dental society contact information.[27]

In addition, identify individuals not associated with organizations, such as dentists and dental hygienists and other health care professionals including nurses, physicians, and the like. From these key contacts, choose those who demonstrate strong interest and advocacy experience for your steering committee or coalition.

TIP Consider beginning your search with the dental community. Dentists understand the dental needs and the need to collaborate with other health care providers, business elements, and organizations that serve children, families, and seniors.

Prepare for the First Meeting

Find a convenient location for your coalition to meet, preferably one that will not involve paying for the room. Choose a time convenient to most of the participants. Offer lunch, for example, if coalition members are donating their lunch hour to attend. Plan an agenda with achievable meeting objectives.[28,29] Be prepared to offer the initial strategy of the executive team or steering committee and seek input from coalition members. Continue to enlist their help throughout the development and implementation of your plan. Be sure to set milestones that can be accomplished in a reasonable time frame to minimize frustration with the planning process.

Work with your steering committee to develop a list of potential coalition members. It is best to engage personal contacts to develop the initial coalition.

- Develop a brief description of your immediate goal. For example: "We will explore the feasibility of fluoridation in our community".
- Determine a location convenient to most of the coalition members. Poll the coalition members for the best time to meet.
- Offer lunch or some "perk" to enliven this initial meeting and develop enthusiasm.

  Be prepared to:

  - Define the oral health problem in your community.
  - Offer an initial overview of the water system(s), governance and recognized leadership in your community.
  - Display a rough outline of your intended path to fluoridation.
- Create an agenda and set realistic expectations for this first meeting: "We will begin by identifying the water system(s) we need to address." Or "We would like your input on identifying key influencers in our community."
- Ask your coalition members to identify additional coalition members. Engage their networking skills!
- Remember "participatory planning" and be prepared to engage your coalition on planning your continued strategy.
- Identify a willing chairperson of your coalition, if separate from your steering committee.
- Obtain input from members to create the agenda for your next meeting.
- Be concise and manage the meeting. Be respectful of the time constraints of attendees.

Sample Agenda for Initial Meeting

- **Fluoridation Coalition**
- **Date and Time**
- **Location**
- **Address: Phone number and Zoom link**
- **Meeting Goal: Explore feasibility of fluoridation in our community.**

Topic	Presenter	Ownership	Start Time	Duration
Welcome and introductions	Committee Chair	Chair	12:00 pm	10 minutes
Overview of state of oral health in community; discussion	To be assigned	Chair; All	12:10 pm	15 minutes
Need for and benefits of fluoridation.	Dental Expert	Dental Expert	12:25 pm	10 minutes
Introduction of a proposed plan; a path to fluoridation. Discussion/Comments	To be assigned	Chair; All	12:35 pm	20 minutes
Summary of meeting and proposed agenda items for next meeting. Review meeting location.	Chair	Chair; All	12:55 pm	5 minutes

Developing a Communication Strategy

You will need a strategy for educating community stakeholders about fluoridation. These stakeholders can include elected officials, news reporters, and editorial boards.

Gather local data that demonstrate the need for fluoridation as well as its safety and efficacy. Include these data in print and online materials you create in support of fluoridating the community water supply. Refer to the evidence-based literature to demonstrate the impact of fluoridation. It is important to indicate that the science of fluoridation is sound. Individuals and local agencies base the decision to fluoridate the water supply on scientific facts as well as on broad-based local support, which is crucial.

It is also important to have a science expert available to respond effectively to misinformation-fueled arguments from anti-fluoridation proponents. Consult with the State Dental Director or the California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center to locate a science expert on fluoridation.

Efforts to fluoridate your community's water may be met with varying levels of support from a variety of people wielding a range of arguments both for and against water fluoridation. One should be aware of attempts to block efforts at every step.[30]

Individual members of the steering committee should educate themselves about fluoridation using the online educational materials on fluoridation provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[31], as well as *Fluoridation Facts* by the ADA[32].

Develop a Problem Statement

Make your community's case for fluoridation with a problem statement addressed to elected officials, decision-makers, and key stakeholders. Often, these individuals are unaware of the extent of the oral health problem in their community, particularly among young children. In a problem statement based on data about your community, you can inform the community's leadership about the tooth decay epidemic and address the cost savings that can be garnered from fluoridation.

- Using local data, define the status of oral health in your community. Local data can include the emergency department visits for treatment of preventable dental problems[33] like tooth decay. Other local data include absences from school for needed treatment of tooth decay. These absences affect the Average Daily Attendance payments to schools. Also, use the California Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment data for your school district or county.[34]
- Search for data from local dental providers such as Federally Qualified Health Centers and/or Children's Dental Clinics.
- Bring the issue to life in a personal story. Such a story often conveys the problem most effectively. In Appendix A, see Letter from a School Nurse for an example.
- Gather parent/family speakers from the community. Include special needs populations in the community.

Develop a Facts Statement/Question and Answer Sheet

- For developing a facts statement/question and answer sheet, use resources at https://ilikemyteeth.org/learn-share/.
- Include fluoridation as the single most important community-based approach to helping to prevent tooth decay.
- Counter misinformation through positive statements about fluoridation.[35]
- There are other preventive measures to address dental decay, such as dental sealants, but fluoridation requires no personal action and cuts across all socio-economic barriers for children and adults. Dental sealants have been found to be more effective in fluoridated areas.[36]
- Community water fluoridation (CWF) is a powerful weapon in the fight for social justice and health equity.[37]

Identify Spokespersons and Draft a Sample Talk

- Identify the people in your coalition who have the skills, experience, and time to serve as public spokespersons. As the campaign advances, ask these spokespersons to give talks or presentations to local stakeholder groups, seeking their support for fluoridation.
- Draft a sample 15-minute talk or presentation that includes these key elements:
  - Dental health problems that affect your community.
  - How poor oral health keeps many residents from living healthy and successful lives.
  - Why fluoridation is an inexpensive way to improve oral health.
  - Avoid the inflammatory language that critics use to create fear. For example, fluoride should be accurately described as "a mineral that exists naturally in water supplies"—as opposed to calling it a "chemical," as opponents do to instill fear.
- Remind spokespersons to revise the sample talk to make it more relevant to the person or group they plan to address. For example, if the audience is the executive board of an advocacy group for older adults, you will want to cite data that reflect seniors' unique oral health issues or needs.
- Anticipate the toughest questions your spokespersons are likely to hear as they give a talk or have a conversation with stakeholder groups. Practice answering these questions.
- Encourage spokespersons to use bridging to the message they want to give to remain on point. Bridging is a technique used during an interview when a question is posed, or a statement is made that will take you off your intended message. Develop a phrase that will enable you to get back to your major points. This way you can "manage" the interview and keep your message in the forefront.

Provide Training on the Media

The local dental society is a good place to start learning more about media training. At the training you provide, ask potential spokespersons to participate in a role-playing experience about fluoridation. Video record participants if possible and provide feedback from a media or communications expert.



TIP Check with the local Dental Society for possible media training opportunities.

When your initiative is active, there will be opportunities for media interviews—scheduled or unexpected. To prepare spokespersons for interviews, train them to stay on message by focusing on the oral health problem in your community.

Work with the Media

Individual reporters might contact the coalition and offer to write a story. However, you are more likely to secure meaningful coverage by developing relationships with local media early in your initiative. A visit to an editorial board can lead to a supportive editorial and assignment of a reporter knowledgeable about health and scientific issues.

Choose a small team, including a dentist or pediatrician familiar with the community's dental health status and an individual informed about the science of fluoridation. Have this team request a meeting with the editorial board of the major or local print organization. At this meeting, lead with data about tooth decay in your community. Then introduce fluoridation as one means of addressing the problem. Give attendees first-hand information from a science expert. The goal is to give the publication's reporters an informed basis for writing about fluoridation.

Give the editorial board a media kit with direct phone numbers for fluoride experts. An effective media kit includes the information that journalists need to write an accurate story about fluoridating the community water supply without having to do time-consuming research, for example:

- A one- or two-page handout describing the benefits and safety of fluoridation based on current science.
- A summary of any previous attempts to fluoridate the water supply.
- A list of community decision-makers and their direct contact information.
- A list of science experts, dentists, and other health care professionals who can answer questions about the safety, health, and cost benefits of fluoridation.

TIP When building your fluoridation education initiative, consider inviting a reporter to visit a clinic site and provide an interview with a clinician prepared to answer questions about fluoridation. A video of the interview can support the case for fluoridation.

TIP Check out the California Dental Association's CDA Cares[38] events, which are expected to resume after the COVID-19 pandemic. They are terrific opportunities for local elected officials and other stakeholders to view the state of oral health among children and adults.

Educate Community Educators

Ensure that your community of dentists and pediatricians from the private and public sectors are informed about your educational efforts and are comfortable with the topic of fluoridation. Dentists, dental hygienists, and pediatricians are trusted professionals, well positioned to provide education on fluoridation. They also address questions patients raise about fluoridation. Community health workers and promotores[39] also engage with families about oral health. Provide these valuable contacts with addresses of informative websites and access to resources such as the ADA's Fluoridation Facts[40]. Offer lectures or workshops for interested professionals.

Suggested Educational Opportunities

Work with your local dental society to arrange for a guest lecture by an expert on fluoridation.

Work with your local dental hygiene society[41] to provide a workshop on fluoridation that offers continuing education units (CEUs) on this topic.

At these meetings, ask professionals to participate in a role-playing experience about fluoridation. Afterward give participants a question and answer (Q and A) handout on fluoridation to take with them. Use these educational opportunities to recruit interested health professionals to your fluoridation stakeholder coalition.

Defining a Project Plan

By now, your team has obtained and assimilated all the information developed in earlier sections of this document. The team now participates in discussions with interested parties and has decided which water systems to target in the region. At this point, it is useful to develop a plan and rough timeline for implementing fluoridation.

Review the planning documents in Appendix A

- *Overview of the Process of Fluoridating Your Community Water Supply* illustrates the process of fluoridating a community from strategy development to implementation.
- *Sample Project Plan* outlines a step-by-step process to define specific tasks for your coalition leadership and members.
- *Fluoridation Project Timeline* demonstrates the flow of activities over a realistic timeframe.

Meet with your leadership team

Following review of the documents, meet with your leadership team to discuss or confirm the recommended approach to the water system(s) or city. Identify the system to approach and a rough timeframe for the activity.

Develop an advocacy plan based on community support and input. Tailor your strategies for obtaining support from key individuals and organizations to the requirements of the region.

DO NOT approach a governing body of a water system with a request to fluoridate until you have garnered significant leadership and support for fluoridation. Once fluoridation is part of the public discourse, it is too late to educate the community effectively. Misinformation about fluoridation can be strident and the opportunity for dialogue is diminished to sound bites.



II. Education and Advocacy

The plan developed in Section I indicates who is likely to support or oppose fluoridation. Once the plan has been finalized, education and advocacy efforts can begin. Before beginning, it is important to note the key differences between education, advocacy and lobbying.

Education: Education is the foundation of your plan and includes creating written materials, websites or social media explaining the safety and benefits of fluoridation.

Advocacy and Lobbying: Advocating for fluoridation requires the joint efforts of a core group of individuals and organizations working toward the common goal of enacting this local health policy.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) provides useful definitions of Advocacy and Lobbying[42].
(see next page)

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the "promotion of an idea that is directed at changing a policy, position, or program at an institution." (IRS, 2016) Advocacy is a strategy that aims to draw attention to or educate a policymaker on a particular issue. Health advocacy includes educating policymakers and the public about evidence-based policy. Advocacy can often be non-partisan and based in research and analysis.

Effective advocacy can do the following:

- Build relationships with policymakers.
- Educate and influence a policymaker or lawmaker's decision.
- Alter existing policies, laws, and budgets.
- Encourage the creation of new programs.

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is the attempt to influence a legislative body through communication with a member or employee of the legislative body or with a government official who participates in constructing legislation. Lobbying can include written or oral communication for or against specific legislation. Rules about lobbying vary according to local jurisdictions. Check the rules in your local health department.

The National Conference of State Legislatures lists state definitions of lobbying and lobbyist.[43]

TIP It is best to check with your administrator before implementing your education and advocacy plan. Lobbying by local and state government employees is generally prohibited. See Fluoridation Education and Advocacy Checklist in Appendix B.

The group's education and advocacy plan consists of the following:

- Engaging volunteers
- Educating themselves and the community:
  - Local leaders and decision-makers
  - Residents
- Obtaining letters of support for decision-makers
- Preparing for a public forum
- Researching and identifying possible funding agencies

Engaging Volunteers

It is essential to maintain the motivation of advocates, many of whom are volunteers. The project plan clarifies the direction and timing of actions, keeps everyone on track, and minimizes frustration. Create milestones to make actions completed by volunteers visible to the group.

A sample fluoridation project timeline can be found in Appendix A.

Steering committee and coalition members are key informants on issues that may be priorities for a city council to address. A water system board of directors may have items that are crucial to their agenda. These issues may compete with fluoridation for attention or funding. It is important to be aware of them. Work with coalition members to determine the most effective timing of advocacy efforts. Learn how to work with volunteers.[44]

Educating the Community

Important: Your advocacy team must always include at least one scientific expert, preferably a dentist, physician, or professor of dentistry, medicine, or public health. Seek guidance from the California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center to identify an expert. These experts play a vital role in communicating the science of fluoridation. They are uniquely qualified to quickly dispel misconceptions about fluoride based on misinformation.

Local Leaders and Decision-makers

Local leaders and decision-makers have authority over the water system. Meet with each decision-maker individually so you can ask each other questions. Focus the meeting on the need for fluoridation.

Support your position with local data, the safety and benefits of fluoridation, and initial cost projections, if available, for implementing and maintaining the water system. Cost projections, however, are difficult to obtain without the input of a professional engineer.

If a scientist is not available to attend the meeting, offer to provide access to a science advisor to answer decision-makers' questions at the earliest opportunity. It is essential to counter misinformation promptly when dialoguing with city council members, the water system's board of directors, and the media.

Residents

Prepare handouts, press releases, a media kit, and any other type of media likely to be read. Identify existing educational networks in your community. Make your fluoridation information available to them. Local health organizations integrate information describing the safety and benefits of fluoridation into their messaging as one element of oral health management. The most effective educators are practitioners who can discuss oral health with patients in their own language. Relevant practitioners include dentists, dental hygienists, pediatricians, nurses, community health workers, family resource center staff[45] and promotores.

Consumers need to be able to approach their health care providers with questions. A one-on-one conversation with a trusted health provider is often the most successful means of informing consumers about fluoridation. See Appendix A for a sample script that walks health care providers through discussing fluoridation with patients.

Obtaining Letters of Support for Decision-makers

As part of your advocacy effort, you must document, for the public record, the support you have obtained for fluoridation in the community. When seeking support from an organization or individual, request that they send you a letter of support, written on their letterhead, addressed to the governing body of the water system. Provide a template or sample letters.

Appendix A includes samples of the kinds of letters that might further your cause. Such letters and oral testimony can come from school nurses, surgery center staff, parents, dental patients or their parents, social workers, and family members. The letters should focus on personal experiences that tell stories about the impact of poor dental health on, for example, education, self-esteem, employment, health, and speech.

Request the opportunity to review the letter of support before it is sent. Most likely, a letter of support for fluoridation will require agency or board approval, so be sure to allow enough time to receive the letters. Ask an executive team member to review the letter. After the review, ask the writer to send the approved letter directly to the governing body of the system, that is, the mayor and council members or the board of directors. Contact the city clerk for specific directions.

Such letters alone will not ensure the success of your initiative, but they will document the fact that you have secured support for fluoridation in your community.

Preparing for a Public Forum

Complete the following preparations before participating in a public forum.

- Offer to train steering committee and collaborative members on how to speak with media and handle media inquiries.
- Prepare speakers to respond effectively to opposing arguments based on misinformation posed by individuals or the media.
- Encourage speakers to practice answering the 3-4 toughest questions they might anticipate, avoiding using defensive language (for example, “It is not true that . . .”).
- Provide sample scripts to those who will testify before a public body. These could be adapted from the sample talk that your coalition has created for its spokespersons.
- Check in with the board secretary or city clerk to acquaint yourself with how the council or board of directors works.
- Find out how much time each speaker will have.
- Plan what each speaker will address to avoid repeating the same points.
- If it is available, review the staff report. This report is usually prepared by a city manager at the request of a city council or by a general manager at the request of a board of directors. The staff report might include a recommendation for or against fluoridation.

Steering committee and coalition members usually reside in the community and often serve as excellent spokespersons to their elected officials. These committed individuals are already known to local officials. Data become meaningful to elected officials when communicated by such constituents.



TIP If you plan to provide public testimony related to your area of expertise, request prior authorization from your administrator.

Municipal Systems

Once community support is established, take your case to the governing body of the water system, that is, the city council, Board of Supervisors, or water system board of directors by requesting to be placed on the agenda. Public hearings might be required.

Private Water Companies

Typically, in this case your coalition will discuss the process of fluoridation with the executive staff of the private company. Plan to work with executive staff of the private water company. A public hearing might be required. Alternatively, a public hearing might not occur until the case is heard by the CPUC. If so, the hearing would likely involve the CPUC.



DO NOT improvise! **DO NOT** be careless with the science, for example, making personal claims of how fluoridation benefits an individual. The science of fluoridation is well documented in the literature. Encourage your speakers to focus on the benefits of fluoridation to the organization's constituents. If, for example, your organization focuses on seniors, describe the dental needs of seniors in your organization, and explain the benefits of fluoridation for them drawn from the literature.

Researching and Identifying Possible Funding Agencies

See Section V Capital Funding



III. Policy Making

Local policy to fluoridate is decided by the water system's governing body, usually a board of directors or city council. These entities prefer public hearings, which they often require before developing policy. At the hearings, scientific experts and community groups present information in support of fluoridation. The local opponents to fluoridation also present their arguments.

Attending a Public Forum—Municipal System

Advocates will be called upon to convey the story of oral health in the community. Practitioners offer personal observations of their patients' need for fluoridation, that is, the state of tooth decay and the cost of treatment. Costs often include treatment for young children under general anesthesia at a local hospital. These costs could be reduced by implementing fluoridation.[46]

Ask a school nurse to describe the case of a child with tooth decay, including learning challenges and time lost from work for the family to seek care. Here is an example:

While I worked at a school site one day, Rita (not her real name) came into the office crying and complaining of a toothache. Her parents had to pick her up and she missed five school days because of the toothache and treatment. Rita is just one child, out of thousands in this area, who could benefit from water fluoridation.

Ensure that all advocates are prepared and understand their roles. Reviewing the tasks in Section II, Advocacy, will assist you in this effort.

Engaging with Water System Executive Staff

Effective strategies for fluoridation consider the engineering realities and priorities of the water system. Discuss with executive staff the cost and timing of implementing fluoridation. After the engineering parameters are defined and the requirements of water system engineers and staff are known, you can have a more detailed discussion with the governing body.

Addressing Water Operators

Involving water operators early in the fluoridation process can be sensitive. Negotiations with the water system will be led by executive staff. It is advised to work through executive staff to reach water operators. Opportunities to provide education on the benefits of fluoridation and the role operators play, can arise after the policy decision has been made to fluoridate. Always respect the administrative hierarchy of the water system when approaching water operators. See Section VI for more information.

Take this opportunity, however, to emphasize the important role water engineers and operators have in improving the oral health of their community. Offer to provide resources for engineers and operators on the safety and oral health benefits of fluoridation. (See Section VI and Appendix A, A Resource for Water Utilities.)

Decision making: When to move forward

Determining readiness to fluoridate in a community is a complex task. Following the steps in this manual will help define a potential path to fluoridation. In addition to assessing resources in your community, seek help from COHTAC and national fluoridation experts, experienced in developing and maintaining fluoridation. Ultimately, your community members are the most knowledgeable about the available resources and timing of your education and advocacy campaign.

Are any capital improvement projects (CIP) planned? Incorporating fluoridation into an upcoming design for a new treatment plant or infrastructure project can save substantial costs and minimize frustration among water system personnel.

First Policy, Then Funding

Achieving fluoridation requires a policy to fluoridate as well as adequate funding to implement the policy. It is sometimes advisable to separate the science of fluoridation from the funding challenges. The science of fluoridation supports a favorable policy. After a policy to fluoridate is established, the science of fluoridation need not be discussed further.

The discussion of the funding source can take place separately. This approach prevents the discussion from devolving into debating the science of fluoridation repeatedly. Also, funding entities frequently prefer a clear policy before they commit funding. The establishment of a clear policy communicates to the funding agency that their funds will be utilized and in a timely manner. Discuss the importance of making an investment in children's health, that can be seen as a legacy project to policy makers and funders.

When policymakers vote to proceed with fluoridation, design and construction can begin if funding is available. If funds are not available, the advocacy team must initiate fundraising efforts. See Section V, Capital Funding (page 30), for details.

A contract to fund will be required between the funding agency and the water system or municipality. The contract may be subject to approval by the city council, board of directors, or Board of Supervisors.

Working with Executive Staff—Private System

A private water system is governed by a board of directors. Advocates do not usually address the board directly. Instead, they work closely with the water system's executive staff. A public hearing might not take place. However, if fluoridation becomes part of a rate case before the CPUC, the rate payers of the system will have an opportunity to submit comments before the CPUC. Work with executive staff for guidance on how to most effectively support the water system's request to the CPUC to fluoridate.

DO NOT phone the water system expecting them to walk you through the process of fluoridation. They do not work for you! It is vital to do your own homework and explore the structure of the system and its general parameters before dialoguing with the water system or its governing body. Remember that a water system is a separate entity that must respond to a set of determinants apart from your request.

Implementing the System

After the system has been constructed, the water system engineer will contact the California State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water district engineer,[47] who will ultimately issue a permit for the system. It is the responsibility of the water system to notify customers and appropriate health professionals that fluoridation will be implemented.[48]

Your coalition can work with the water system to help notify customers and the professional community. Professional organizations know how to communicate with their members effectively. For example, the local dental society might want to send an email blast to its membership announcing the startup of fluoridation or place an announcement in their monthly newsletter.

Keep in mind that the more the community takes ownership of fluoridation, the more likely it is that fluoridation will be implemented without interruption from those opposed to it.



IV. Preventing or Reversing a Rollback

In the present context, the term *rollback* refers to the cessation of fluoridation in a community. A rollback is often initiated by those opposed to fluoridation. A rollback can occur in a community that has been fluoridated for many years.

How a Rollback Starts

California law on fluoridation supersedes a local ordinance if the water system has more than 10,000 service connections and funding is identified from a "source other than the system's ratepayers, shareholders, local taxpayers, bondholders, or any fees or charges levied by the water system". Additionally, governing bodies of water systems can choose voluntarily to initiate and continue fluoridation.

However, smaller systems and those where the funds are not identified, may be subject to rollback efforts. Either the action of the water system's governing body or a successful ballot measure can roll back fluoridation. A request to a city council or water system board of directors to cease fluoridation can cause a governing body to decide by majority vote to stop fluoridating the water supply. To roll back fluoridation in a privately-owned water system, the CPUC might also be involved.

Individuals opposed to fluoridation can approach the city council or the water system's board of directors and ask that they stop fluoridating. City government might stop fluoridation to save money. Or the opposition might gather enough qualifying signatures to place a stop fluoridation measure on the ballot of an upcoming election.

It is crucial to act quickly.

Investigate the Reason for the Proposed Rollback

If the attempt to roll back is within the purview of the governing body, find out the following:

- Why was the cessation of fluoridation proposed?
- Who initiated and who supported the cessation of fluoridation?
- Was the measure an attempt to save costs?
- Were equipment problems or operating costs a factor?

If the reason for ceasing fluoridation is financial:

- First, reinforce the point that fluoridation is a public health measure that is proven to save money for residents by reducing dental treatment costs.
- Can you assist in locating funding?
- Or can you develop support from the governing body to allocate the necessary funding?
- Does the state health department or an environmental agency offer any grants to help repair or upgrade water system equipment?

Form a Coalition to Respond

Reach out to community agencies. See the list of agencies in Section I under Developing a Steering Committee or Coalition, to identify community agencies quickly. See also Developing a Communication Strategy in the same section. Steps for recruiting volunteers can be found in the Fluoridation Strategy Checklist in Appendix B.

In Appendix A, see an example of talking points you can develop to assist you in overturning or preventing the rollback. Appendix A also includes sample letters to decision-makers in support of restoring fluoridation.

- Mobilize the support of local dental and medical societies.
- Ask dentists and pediatricians to remind patients of the safety and cost saving benefits of fluoridation.
- Contact initial supporters of fluoridation. Perhaps those who advocated for the initial effort to fluoridate can help.
- Seek examples of other water systems faced with the same issue and determine how they resolved to continue water fluoridation.
- Write letters of support for fluoridation to the city council or board of directors of the water system.
- If the rollback attempt results in a ballot measure, you will need an advocacy campaign. If possible, obtain the services of an agency skilled in campaigns.

DO NOT ignore the rollback attempt or hope that fluoridation will resume in the future without intervention. The water system's governing body is unlikely to act without community involvement.

Why it is Important to Respond Now

The sooner advocates respond to a rollback attempt, the easier it will be to succeed.

Advocating in support of fluoridation before it has stopped is easier than advocating to place it back in the operating budget. Also, equipment problems can arise if the equipment is idle for too long.

Unfortunately, responding to a rollback might require as many resources as an initial fluoridation undertaking. Responding quickly and effectively to the rollback can help you avoid this expensive path.

Further reading on Preventing a Rollback can be found at https://fluoridationtoolkit.org/toolkit/is-cwf-threatened-in-your-community (Accessed on November 11, 2020) and Fluoridation Policy Making Checklist in Appendix B



V. Capital Funding

Ideally, discussions about potential sources of capital funding would take place in Section I, Strategy. However, it might not be possible to locate funding or obtain a commitment to fund until the effort to fluoridate is further along in the process. A funding agency might require a formal policy to be in place before committing funds.

Who Funds Fluoridation?

Historically, California fluoridation systems have been supported with funding from the following:

- Foundations
- First 5 organizations at the county level[49]
- The public water system
- State public health departments
- A combination of public and private sources

Educate Prospective Funders by Networking

Raising capital dollars is like advocating for fluoridation. You must educate prospective funders about the status of oral health in your community and the need for fluoridation. To do so, network with key influential sources within the prospective funder organization. Networking has been shown to be much more effective than simply submitting a grant application, which is usually insufficient. Begin your first discussion with a potential funder by emphasizing the state of oral health in the community. Provide a compelling story. Support your position with testimony, keeping in mind that fluoridation is a response to an unmet community need.

Inquire about the strategic planning process and funding cycle of each organization researched.



VI. Communicating with Operators[50]

Water utility operators do not often receive the recognition they deserve for the important contribution they make to public health. They sometimes find themselves on the front line of opposition to water fluoridation and have been persuaded to cease operations.

Interest and accolades from you can have an important positive impact on how water operators perceive fluoridation. Here are suggested ways you can support water operators and counter fluoridation opposition.

- Tour your local water plant.
- Express interest in the process and their work.
- Thank them for providing safe drinking water to their residents.
- Thank them for providing fluoride to help prevent cavities and improving the overall health of children in the community.
- If you are a health practitioner, consider sharing the story of a patient that illustrates the importance of disease prevention.
- Let them know the impact they are having.
- Ask if any staff would like a presentation describing the safety and benefits of fluoridation. Refer them to the CDC's online training, Fluoridation Learning Online.[51]
- Help them feel like members of the health care team.[52]



A Final Word

This Fluoridation Manual was created under contract between the University of California San Francisco and the California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health. It is intended as a user guide for those seeking to initiate and maintain water fluoridation in California communities to minimize the burden of tooth decay for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, age, or other considerations. Providing universal access to optimal fluoride concentrations in drinking water is the best way a community can protect the oral health of all inhabitants.

Drafts of this manual have been reviewed by experts listed on the right.

Please contact the California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health and the California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center to provide feedback on this manual to improve any future editions.

Successful Efforts at Initiating or Maintaining Fluoridation

After fluoridation has been implemented or a challenge has been overcome, thank the decision-makers and those involved in the process. Periodically remind the public of the benefits of fluoridation.

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Appendix A: Sample Documents

A2 Overview of the Process of Fluoridating Your Community Water Supply

A4 Sample Project Plan

A8 Sample Fluoridation Timeline

A10 What Health Care Providers Can Tell Patients

A12 Fluoridation Information to Help Answer Customer Questions

A13 A Resource for Water Utilities

A14 Sample Talking Points

A15 Letter from a School Nurse

A16 Letter from CA Department of Public Health in support of fluoridation of San Jose

A17 Letter from First 5 CEO to Chair, Santa Clara Valley Water District, in support of initiation of fluoridation.

A18 Letter from a dentist to Mayor of Santa Maria opposing a rollback

A19 Letter from President of the Hispanic Dental Association to Mayor of Santa Maria urging resumption of fluoridation

Overview: Process of Fluoridating Your Community Water Supply



- Assess the area's water supply.
- Learn the area's fluoridation history.
- Develop a steering committee or coalition.
- Develop a communication strategy.
- Develop a project plan.

- Engage volunteers.
- Educate the advocates and the community.
- Write to decision-makers.
- Prepare for a public forum.
- Research and identify possible funding agencies.

- Attend a public forum and provide testimony.
- Engage with water system executive staff.
- Achieve policy in favor of fluoridation.

Policy has been established and the funding package can be secured.

A contract to fund and construct the fluoridation system is usually created between the funding agency and the water system.

Final design and construction of a fluoridation system require approximately two years if installed at a treatment plant. If there are capital improvement projects to be made or the system contains multiple wells, more time may be required.

The fluoridation system must be tested prior to implementation. Testing can require several months to complete. Implementation of fluoridation will occur following notification to health practitioners and the public. The notification requirements are contained in California regulations.

Sample Project Plan

Steering Committee/Coalition Activity

Identify the water systems in the county and the communities they serve.

- Research to determine any prior history with fluoridation.
- Identify the water system of interest.
- Determine the governance of the water system.

Develop a steering committee or coalition.

- A broad-based coalition represents the unique makeup of the communities served by the water systems; for example: senior citizen groups, schools, school nurses, neighborhood associations, labor unions, faith-based groups, health and dental professionals, business groups, community clinics, universities or colleges.
- Determine a regular meeting schedule.

Develop a communication strategy.

- Map out a problem statement, for example, identify decay rates in parts of the county. Fluoridation is a solution to an oral health problem.
- Using websites such as https://ilikemyteeth.org and Centers for Disease Control (CDC), create educational materials appropriate to the community.
- Who will respond to media inquiries?
  - Identify spokespersons. Train them to engage with the media. Prepare a sample talk.

Define the agencies and organizations to approach for support. Approach senior citizen groups, schools, school nurses, neighborhood associations, labor unions, faith-based groups, health and dental professionals, business groups, community clinics, universities or colleges.

- Who will gather endorsements?
- Is a presentation required?
- Request a letter of support?

Educate the educators.

Reach out to healthcare providers and offer an update on water fluoridation. Encourage dialogue with patients:

- Offer a talk at the dental society with a fluoridation expert.
- Reach out to dental hygiene societies.
- Provide in-service for community health workers and promotores on the benefits of fluoridation.
- Ask coalition members and science experts to speak with pediatricians.

Educate the decision makers.

Identify community leaders and decision makers. Create a dialogue:

- Answer questions about fluoridation misinformation.

	Who is Responsible	Start	Finish

Sample Project Plan (cont.)

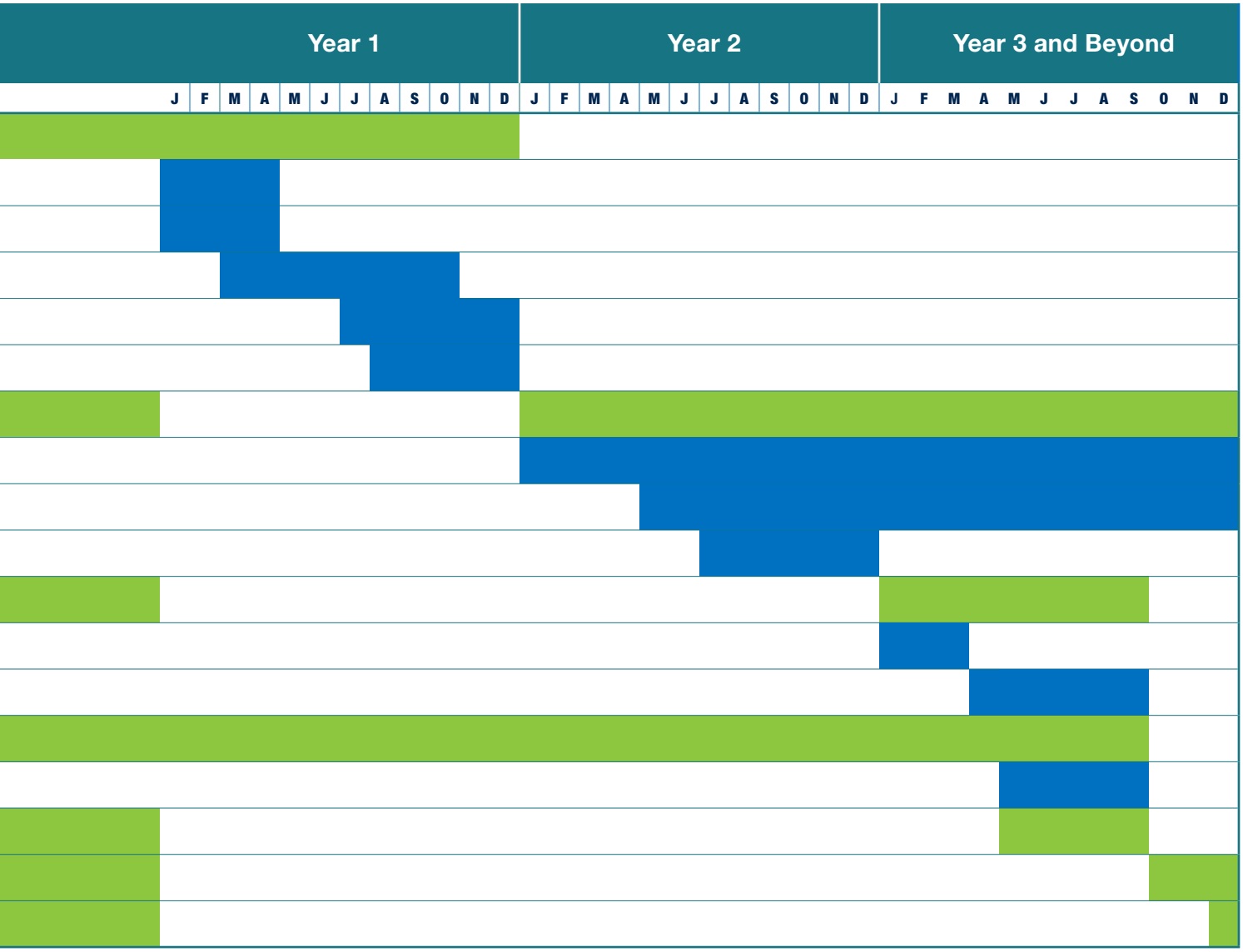
Steering Committee/Coalition Activity
Educate the community. • Provide materials for organizations to distribute to their membership. • Provide social media messages for coalition members and organizations to share. • Offer a presentation at a parent or senior group. • Participate in health fairs.
Engage the media if appropriate. • Your expert spokesperson is trained and available. • Demonstrate the need for fluoridation: Create an opportunity for a media interview at a children's dental clinic.
Prepare for a public forum if needed. • Provide scripts for speakers. • Role play to answer tough questions. • Review the staff report.
Research and identify possible funding agencies. Working with your steering committee and/or coalition, research possible sources of funding. Consider the following: • Foundations • First 5 organizations at the county level • The public water system • State public health department • A combination of public and private sources
Policy is created. • Attend the public meeting if appropriate. • Provide testimony if needed. • Thank the decision makers.
Confirm the funding package. • Identify the capital funding. • Develop agreement with water system if needed. • Monitor contract development if needed.
Fluoridation implementation: • Follow fluoridation construction and implementation schedule. • Continue to monitor progress or any rollback attempts.
Celebrate success • Thank coalition members, stakeholders and decision makers. • Acknowledge policy makers for their action. • Provide certificates for coalition members.

	Who is Responsible	Start	Finish

Sample Fluoridation Timeline

Fluoridation Project Timeline
Strategy
Assess area's water supply
Learn area's fluoridation history
Develop steering committee or coalition
Develop communications strategy
Develop project plan
Education and Advocacy
Educate the community
Dialogue with decision makers
Prepare for a public forum
Policy making
Attend a public forum
Achieve policy in favor of fluoridation
Fund Raising
Secure funding package
Contract development
Construction 2+ years
Testing and Implementation

This sample displays a three-year timeline beginning in January. Note that your fluoridation effort can begin in any month and require more or less time to complete. The color green indicates the start and duration of the major project components of Strategy, Education and Advocacy, Policy Making, Fund Raising, Contract Development, Construction, and Testing and Implementation.


Year 1
Year 2
Year 3 and Beyond
J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D J F M A M J J A S O N D

What Health Care Providers Can Tell Patients – *a suggested script*

The 5 As (similar to tobacco cessation counseling)

1. Ask

"Do you live in a fluoridated part of the County?" "If you don't know, we can look that up."
Based on the response, provide advice, followed by assessing their use of fluoridated water and their willingness to support community efforts to maintain or initiate fluoridation.

If YES, do you drink tap water or cook with it?	**If NO, do you drink tap water or cook with it?**
2. Advise	
You should drink fluoridated tap water and cook with it to help reduce the risk for tooth decay (cavities) for you and your family.	Because you don't have fluoridated water, we should consider having your children reduce their high risk for cavities by prescribing fluoride supplements.
3. Assess	
• If you already do, then congratulations – that will help to reduce the number of new cavities you get. • If you don't, then, for the health of your teeth - Refill your water bottle with tap water; it's also better for the environment. - Ask for tap water when eating out.	• Would you be willing to support our effort to have our water fluoridated? • If yes, would you be interested in helping our County Oral Health Access Coalition? • If no – here is some information on fluoride's safety and benefits.

4. **Assist** all patients

- Provide access to good information resources on fluoridation.
- Advise your patients to reduce their risk for tooth decay
  - By brushing twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste.
  - By reducing frequency of sugar consumption.
  - By receiving fluoride varnish for those at high risk for caries.

5. **Arrange** for all patients

- To provide answers to questions
- Follow up at future visits

For patients who are opposed to fluoridation and don't want to use fluoride:

- Advise them to severely restrict their sugar frequency, as if they are "allergic to sugar."
- Recommend increasing the frequency of dental checkups and caries risk assessments.
- Answer their questions politely—no need to be argumentative.
- Say that you've reviewed the evidence and you're convinced of fluoridation's safety and benefits.

Keep it simple!

"I'm so glad we have fluoridation", or "you would probably have some cavities", or "more cavities and the decay would be more extensive".

"I wish we had fluoridation that would probably have reduced your number of cavities and the decay would be less extensive."

"It's great for kids and adults as well."

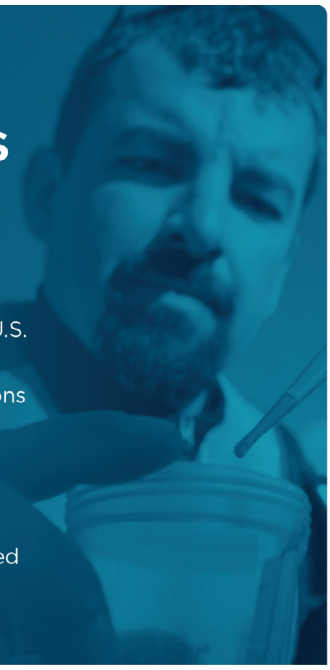
"I'm convinced of fluoridation's safety based on the research I've seen."

"Fluoridation's safety and benefits are backed by more than 75 years of experience in the USA, 65 years in San Francisco, 45 years of experience in Marin and the East Bay."

"There's overwhelming consensus on its benefits and safety and it has saved so much money – $ billions"

Fluoridation Information to Help Answer Customer Questions

A Resource for Water Utilities



Many people take for granted that community water fluoridation (CWF) in the U.S. is a safe and well-accepted public health practice, but some people question or even oppose it. As a water facility operator, you may be confronted with questions from the customers you serve.

We know that fluoridation is only a small portion of the important job you do. That's why we have developed brief responses to common questions you may receive. Go to ilikemyteeth.org/waterops for more information on the topics listed below, including links to easy-to-read information for you and your customers.

Community Water Fluoridation is Effective & Safe

- CWF is **effective**. It has been proven to prevent dental disease by 25% or more, reducing painful and costly decay for children AND adults.
- CWF is **safe**. The best available scientific evidence from around the world, and more than seven decades of experience here in the United States, proves the safety of fluoridation.
- CWF is **supported** by all the nation's major health and medical groups, and it is supported by the American Water Works Association, the leading association of water supply professionals.
- Just like cars have seat belts *and* air bags, fluoride in water **adds to protection** we get from fluoride in toothpaste and other dental products.
- CWF is a public good because it **benefits everyone**. It helps people of all ages and incomes, especially children and families who cannot get regular preventive care or dental treatment.
- CWF is a **widespread** public health practice. Nearly 75% of people served by public water systems in the U.S. have fluoridated water. It has been in place in the United States for over 70 years.
- CWF **saves money** for individuals and the public sector by reducing the need for costly treatment of cavities and related problems.
- CWF is **needed prevention**. Tooth decay is largely preventable, yet it is still the most common disease of childhood, and adults suffer, too. On average, over 30% of people under the age of 44 have untreated cavities. The cost of treatment is one of the main reasons people don't get help. Fluoridation helps everyone prevent unnecessary decay and save money, just by drinking tap water.



For more information visit **ilikemyteeth.org/waterops**

American Academy of Pediatrics. Campaign for Dental Health. Fluoridation Information to Help Answer Customer Questions: A Resource for Water Utilities. Available at https://ilikemyteeth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AAP-Water-Ops-Handout_v3a.pdf (accessed October 26, 2021).

About Fluoride & Fluoridation

Fluoride occurs naturally in all water. Community water fluoridation is the adjustment of the fluoride level to the correct amount to prevent tooth decay.

The current recommended level of fluoride concentration in water is 0.7 mg/L. Water operators closely monitor and adjust these levels. For more information, customers can refer to their water quality reports and also check their water utility's website.

Go to ilikemyteeth.org/waterops for more information on:

- Regulation of drinking water
- Fluoride Additives

Specific Topics You May Encounter

Customers may have questions about a variety of issues related the practice or cost of fluoridation, topics that fall outside the range of responsibilities of water utility staff.

Go to ilikemyteeth.org/waterops for more information on:

- Fluoridation & the role of government
- Cost savings of fluoridation
- Fluoridation outside the U.S.
- Sources of fluoride additives
- Fluoride, the environment & waste
- Links to state & national organizations



Who we are

The Campaign for Dental Health (CDH) is a program of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The CDH was created to ensure that people of all ages have access to the most effective, affordable and equitable way to protect teeth from decay — community water fluoridation. It is our mission to provide the public and policy makers with the evidence-based information and tools they need to promote and protect this important public health measure. We believe, quite simply, that life is better with teeth.

Thank you for the important work you do!

We are interested in hearing about the questions your customers are asking. Please email us with questions and comments at **fluoride@aap.org.**

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. This publication has been developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The authors and contributors are expert authorities in the field of pediatrics. No commercial involvement of any kind has been solicited or accepted in the development of the content of this publication. The appearance of any corporate logo on AAP publications does not constitute or imply an endorsement of any product or service.
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DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®

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life is better WITH TEETH

For more information visit **ilikemyteeth.org/waterops**

Sample Talking Points for a Community Facing a Rollback Attempt

This sample district began fluoridation in (year), as the result of a ballot in (year).
Since then, generations of residents have benefited from water fluoridation. Just look around you and you will see … grandparents, parents, and children have benefited from (Dentists: comment on your own experience with what you see regarding decay.)

Poor oral health is a widespread public health problem for people of all ages.
Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease—5 times more common than asthma, 4 times more common than early childhood obesity, and 20 times more common than diabetes.[53]

The American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics support community water fluoridation as the single most effective public health measure to prevent tooth decay.
Studies show that community water fluoridation prevents at least 25% of tooth decay in children and adults.[54] [55]

Fluoridation of drinking water is a safe and cost-effective way to significantly reduce poor oral health—that is why it has been declared one of the 10 great public health achievements in the 20th century.[56]

The protection fluoridation provides is important for children and adults, especially the most vulnerable among us.
In New York State, for example, Medicaid enrollees in counties without optimal fluoridation needed 33% more fillings, root canals, and extractions than those in counties where fluoridated water was prevalent.[57]

Fluoridation products are tested, and fluoridated drinking meets regulatory standards for safety.
The claim that they are not is false. All products added to drinking water that are manufactured, sold, or distributed in North America must meet NSF/ANSI[58] standards for quality. NSF's testing and certification program for drinking water treatment products was developed in the late 1980s to ensure that individual U.S. states and waterworks facilities have a mechanism to determine which products are most suitable for use.[59]

The benefits of community water fluoridation are recognized by more than 100 national and international health care or scientific organizations, including the CDC, the American Cancer Society, the World Health Organization, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, and the American Medical Association.[60]

Letter from a School Nurse

I have worked as a Registered Nurse in (location) for eight years and have been a Public Health Nurse working with very low-income school-age children for six of those years. I have seen lots of injuries and illnesses over the years. Tooth decay is a health issue that can easily be prevented in children with fluoride. However, most of the city does not have fluoridated water and many children suffer.

While I worked at a school site one day, Rita (not her real name) came into the school office crying and holding her left cheek. When I asked Rita what happened, I expected her to say she was hit with a ball on the playground. Instead, Rita said she had a toothache. She had been up all night because of the pain and now her head was throbbing. She couldn't stand the pain anymore. I called Rita's parents and had them pick her up from school. She had trouble paying attention in class because of the pain. If she stayed in class, her crying would have distracted other students. I asked Rita's parents to take her to the dentist as soon as possible.

As soon as possible turned out to be several days later. Rita missed a total of five days of school because the dentist could not treat Rita right away and she missed one day for the procedure and one day after to recover. Rita lost valuable classroom learning time because of her toothache. She was also embarrassed and ashamed for having "rotten teeth."

Water fluoridation could have helped prevent Rita's pain and suffering and keep her in school. It also could have saved money because one of her parents couldn't work while caring for Rita. It also would have been more cost effective than Rita's dental procedure. Rita is just one child, out of thousands in this area, who could benefit from water fluoridation, regardless of income level or access to dental care.

Sincerely,
{Name Withheld}

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health

KAREN L. SMITH, MD, MPH
Director & State Health Officer

EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor

January 25, 2015

The Honorable Barbara Keegan
Chair, Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118-3686

Subject: Community Water Fluoridation Project

Dear Chair Keegan:

I am writing this letter to express the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) support for the water fluoridation project in San Jose. I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for taking an important step to improve the oral health of the residents of your community.

Fluoridation of drinking water is considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as one of ten great public health achievements of the 20th century. In California, more than 24 million people are served by fluoridated public water supplies. By expanding fluoridation to county residents, San Jose will help the State towards achieving the national goal of 80% of the population receiving fluoridated water.

Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic childhood diseases. It is associated with difficulty in eating, sleeping, learning, and proper nutrition. Among adults, untreated tooth decay and tooth loss can have negative effects on an individual's self-esteem and employability. Therefore, the prevention of tooth decay is a priority in public health agenda. The US Community Preventive Services Task Force, an expert panel that makes prevention-oriented, evidence-based recommendations based on scientific reviews issued a strong recommendation in 2001 and again in 2013 for community water fluoridation.

According to CDC, fluoridation saves money, both for families and health care system. More than 70 years of research and experience have shown that fluoridation is safe, effective and cost saving. The CDPH, CDC and the Office of the United States Surgeon General all support fluoridation of public water supplies because of the significant health benefits.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 916-324-1715.

Sincerely,

Jayanth Kumar

Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH
State Dental Director
California Department of Public Health
1616 Capitol Avenue, Suite 74.456
Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

Oral Health Program, MS 7210 • P.O. Box 997377 • Sacramento, CA 95899-7377
(916) 324-1715 • (916) 552-9729 FAX
www.cdph.ca.gov

Letter from First 5 in support of initiation of fluoridation.

FIRST 5
SANTA CLARA COUNTY

The First 5 years.
Make them count.

January 26, 2016

The Honorable Barbara Keegan
Chair, Santa Clara Valley Water District
5750 Almaden Expressway
San Jose, CA 95118-3686

Dear Chair Keegan:

On behalf of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, I am writing to express our continued support for community water fluoridation. Tonight's approval of the Fluoridation Construction Contract is an important milestone in realizing the policy the Board adopted on November 15, 2011 to fluoridate the District's three water treatment plants. We thank the Board for its leadership to fluoridate the District's water treatment facilities.

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease found in young children, and one effective method to prevent tooth decay in children is fluoridation. In Santa Clara County, roughly 50 percent of low-income children have a history of cavities before they enter Kindergarten. Oral health diseases can affect children's growth, speech development, nutritional intake, and overall quality of life. As a leading provider of programs and services for children prenatal through age 5 in Santa Clara County, FIRST 5 is committed to ensuring that children are born healthy and stay healthy. Our Health & Wellness Initiative takes a multi-pronged approach to prevent oral health diseases and ensure optimal oral health for our youngest children. This is why FIRST 5 Santa Clara County has committed over $1 million to the implementation of fluoridation at the District's water treatment plants, along with The Health Trust and the California Dental Association. Some children in our County have enjoyed the benefits of fluoridated water for decades. We are committed to health equity and believe that all children in Santa Clara County should have access to the same health benefits.

We are proud to stand as a funder and supporter of community water fluoridation and oral health disease prevention. Thank you again for your actions to ensure that children in Santa Clara County experience optimal oral health.

Sincerely,

Jolene Smith, Chief Executive Officer

4000 Moorpark Avenue, Suite 200 • San Jose, CA 95117 • T 408.260.3700 F 408.296.5642 • info@first5kids.org •

Letter from a dentist opposing a rollback

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

The Honorable _____
Mayor, City of Santa Maria
110 E. Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454-5190

Dear Mayor _____:

It has been discovered that the City of Santa Maria's fluoridation facility has been shut off since October 2018, alleging to save $48,000 annual operational cost. (See https://www.cityofsantamaria.org/home/showdocument?id=24126 at page C-27.) The decision to take this responsibility seems initiated with little, if any, awareness or action from the city council.

Madam Mayor, I can hardly believe that it's been 15 years since we successfully turned the tap on fluoridation in Santa Maria. You, Dr. [Name Withheld], and myself are the lone survivors from that enthusiastic event, and in the end, we endured a contentious ballot vote that certainly went through the democratic processes.

That endeavor was heavily focused on educating the council, city management, the public- even a few dentists- on the efficacy and safety of this major national public health policy. It may be time to meet with the council again for Q and A and see where the issues lie. Dr. [Name Withheld] and I are eager to assist the council in resolving this mishap.

Thankfully, the coalition that worked so wonderfully together to bring fluoridation to Santa Maria is still active and made up of authorities in county health, state public health and utilities, dental school researchers/professors, the State Dental Director, and of course, the California Dental Association (CDA). We are determined to see this major health benefit resume quickly. For every day, without fluoridation, the cost in health care dollars to Santa Maria children and adults could be approximately $8-$10,000 a day, versus $123.00/day to resume this sensible and valuable public health benefit. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully Yours,
Dr. {Name Withheld}

Letter from the President of the Hispanic Dental Association urging resumption of fluoridation

HISPANIC DENTAL ASSOCIATION

1717 Pennsylvania Ave, Ste. 1025
Washington, DC, 20006
Phone: (855) 337-9992

June 10, 2019

The Honorable Alice Patino
Mayor, City of Santa Maria
110 E. Cook Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454-5190

Subject: Water Fluoridation

Dear Mayor Patino:

I am writing this letter as the President of the Hispanic Dental Association (HDA).

The HDA represents over 6000 oral health professionals including dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, residents, and students of all oral health disciplines. It has 42 student chapters in dental schools across the nation, 20 professional chapters and a growing number of international members.

The HDA mission statement includes our **SEAL** – "As the leading voice for Hispanic Oral Health we provide **S**ervice, **E**ducation, **A**dvocacy and **L**eadership for promotion of Overall Health of the Hispanic and other under-served communities."

Based on abundant research and Evidence Based Dentistry, fluoridation of public water delivery systems has been proven to be the largest accomplishment in the public health arena in the 20th century.

Despite all the technology and advances in the field of dentistry tooth decay remains the most common and prevalent chronic childhood disease and it has been attributed to 51 million school hours lost by our school-age children. These children do not come to school because of the pain and infection of dental disease or cannot concentrate in school-related tasks due to dental pain. It is proven that the fluoride ion reinforces the enamel of the teeth thus reducing the risk for demineralization and caries lesion development.

We at the HDA unite our voice & efforts with partner organizations such as the American Dental Association, the Center for Disease Control, the National Dental Association, and many others to support the request to the city of Santa Maria to **resume** water fluoridation for the improvement of the oral and general health and the education of the residents of your community.

Should you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact the Hispanic Dental Association.

Yours in health,

Ricardo Y. Mendoza, DDS, MS, FICD
HDA President

CC: Council Member Gloria Soto
Council Member Michael Moats, MD
Council Member Etta Waterfield
Council Member Mike Cordero
Jason Stilwell, City Manager

Officers:

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DDS, MS

Immediate Past President
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MD, DDS, MS

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Ana Zea, DDS

Student Trustee
Herta Granado

Managing Director
Jen Blake, CDA

Executive Director & CEO
Manuel A. Cordero, DDS, CPH

MISSION
As the leading voice for Hispanic Oral Health we provide Service, Education, Advocacy, and Leadership for the promotion of Overall Health of the Hispanic and other under-served communities.

Appendix B: Fluoridation Checklists

B2 **Fluoridation Strategy Checklist**

B3 **Fluoridation Education and Advocacy Checklist**

B4 **Fluoridation Policy Making Checklist**

B4 **Fluoridation Rollback Checklist**

B5 **Fluoridation Management and Additional Resources**

Checklists

Fluoridation Strategy Checklist

This checklist can help you ensure that you have completed all the necessary steps in your initiative. Check off items as you complete them.

Assess the region's water supply

- ☐ List the relevant water sources.
- ☐ How are the water systems governed?
- ☐ Identify communities or unincorporated areas served.
- ☐ Does the water supply consist of surface water treatment plants, wells, or both?
- ☐ What is the naturally occurring fluoride level in the water supply?

Learn the area's fluoridation history

- ☐ Review the community's history of the fluoridation issue.
- ☐ Is this an effort to initiate, maintain or reinstate fluoridation?
- ☐ Locate press articles that have been written on fluoridation.
- ☐ Research relevant items before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).
- ☐ Contact key members of the earlier initiative and learn from their experiences.
- ☐ Identify prior city council or water board decisions in favor of or opposed to fluoridation.
- ☐ Review past fluoridation efforts in the state.
- ☐ Identify earlier litigation concerning fluoridation.

Develop a steering committee or coalition

- ☐ For support, contact UCSF COHTAC (California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center).
- ☐ Learn the community's leadership structure.
- ☐ Choose your leadership or executive committee.
- ☐ Appoint a steering committee chairperson.

Choose your coalition members from the following list. Be sure your coalition is composed of a variety of professionals to assist with the scientific components of the issues.

- ☐ Relevant medical and dental societies
- ☐ Dental hygiene and dental assisting groups
- ☐ School districts
- ☐ Universities
- ☐ Senior organizations
- ☐ Chambers of Commerce
- ☐ Labor unions and employer groups
- ☐ Relevant community organizations
- ☐ Children's groups
- ☐ Faith based groups
- ☐ Neighborhood organizations
- ☐ Ethnic advocacy groups
- ☐ Community Health Workers/Promotores
- ☐ Children Now
- ☐ First 5 (County)
- ☐ CPEHN (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network)
- ☐ County/Clinic dental director
- ☐ Public Health Officer
- ☐ Water engineer or operator
- ☐ Public Health Nurse
- ☐ Attorney
- ☐ Parent-teacher organization members
- ☐ Pharmacist
- ☐ Biochemist
- ☐ Marketing professional
- ☐ Parents of special needs children

Use the following list to identify a contact person in county, state, and national organizations who can provide support and expertise.

- ☐ Dental, dental hygiene, and dental assisting schools
- ☐ State and county health departments
- ☐ State and county nursing organizations
- ☐ American Association of Public Health Dentistry
- ☐ Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
- ☐ American Academy of Pediatrics
- ☐ Medical and Dental Associations and Societies

Fluoridation Education and Advocacy Checklist

This checklist can help you ensure that you have completed all the necessary steps in your initiative. Check off items as you complete them.

Prepare for the first meeting

- ☐ Set a date for the first organizing committee meeting.
- ☐ Prepare an agenda for the meeting.
- ☐ Create contact information for your network.

Formulate a Communication Plan

- ☐ Create a problem statement.
- ☐ Gather local data—if needed, conduct a survey to assess the caries status and dental needs of school children or any other age or ethnic groups.
- ☐ Prepare a Fact Statement and Q&A.
- ☐ Identify spokespeople in the community.
- ☐ Organize a speaker's workshop.
- ☐ Familiarize speakers with risk communication methods.
- ☐ Using role play, prepare for media interviews.
- ☐ Prepare a media kit and leave-behind statements.
- ☐ Plan media strategies.
- ☐ Identify key media people at the newspaper, TV, and radio stations, approach, and educate.

Educate the Educators

- ☐ Arrange for an expert to speak before the local dental society.
- ☐ Arrange for an expert to speak before pediatricians.
- ☐ Arrange for an expert and a dental hygienist to speak before a dental hygiene group.
- ☐ Ask your local health department to train community workers and promotores groups.

Define a Project Plan

Specify the committee's goals for conducting strategy, advocacy, policy making, and fund-raising efforts.

- ☐ Define an achievable milestone for each goal.
- ☐ Create a rough timeline.
- ☐ Plan a realistic meeting schedule.

Engage the volunteers

- ☐ Explain the details of your project plan to volunteers.
- ☐ Hold meetings at times convenient to volunteers.
- ☐ Find ways to recognize and reward volunteers' efforts.

Educate the community, local leaders, decision-makers, and potential funders

- ☐ Identify your expert team. Include a dentist, pediatrician, or professor of dentistry.
- ☐ Plan to meet with decision-makers individually.
- ☐ Share your problem statement.
- ☐ Identify community organizations willing to share your message. Share with these organizations your experience of communicating effectively about fluoridation.

Obtain letters of support for decision-makers

The goal is to obtain endorsements from national, state, and local organizations, which decision-makers can use in support of fluoridation.

- ☐ To make it easy for organizations to contact the governing body, provide them with mailing and email addresses of the appropriate city clerk.
- ☐ Contact key local organizations and request a letter of support on agency letterhead, to be addressed and delivered directly to the governing body of the water system.
- ☐ Contact key national and state organizations with the same request.

Checklists (cont.)

Fluoridation Policy Making Checklist

This checklist can help you ensure that you have completed all the necessary steps in your initiative.

The list below assumes a public hearing will be required. Check off items as you complete them.

Determine if a public hearing is necessary before a council or board of directors.

Prepare for the Public Forum

Identify experts and citizens who can present testimony at the public forum.

- ☐ First 5 (county)
- ☐ Parent-teacher organizations
- ☐ Parents of special needs children
- ☐ Labor unions
- ☐ Citizens groups
- ☐ Business groups
- ☐ Dentists
- ☐ Dental hygienists
- ☐ Dental assistants
- ☐ Water engineers and operators
- ☐ Physicians
- ☐ State and local public health officials
- ☐ Nurses
- ☐ Attorneys
- ☐ Clergy and other religious leaders
- ☐ Politicians
- ☐ Former council or commission members
- ☐ Mayors or county commissioners

Finalize public forum arrangements

- ☐ Email letters of support to the city clerk or clerk of the water board.
- ☐ Confirm commitments of experts and citizens to present testimony at the public hearing.
- ☐ Ensure that the executive team has reviewed all statements before the hearing.
- ☐ Confirm arrangements to have audio-visual and printed materials at the meeting, if appropriate.
- ☐ Review the staff report and recommendations submitted to the city council or board of directors, if available.

Last-minute tasks

- ☐ Confirm that those who have agreed to speak will be present.
- ☐ If you plan to use an audio-visual system, ensure that it is in place and working as expected.
- ☐ Ensure that printed materials are available. Distribute them to attendees.

Implement the system

- ☐ Follow the process to be sure the system is constructed without delay.
- ☐ Work with the water system to confirm the notification process.

Fluoridation Rollback Checklist

Investigate the reason for the rollback.

- ☐ Was cost saving a concern?
- ☐ Were equipment problems involved?
- ☐ Is there new opposition to fluoridation?

Is the rollback within the purview of the governing body? If so:

- ☐ Contact initial supporters of fluoridation.
- ☐ Ask dentists and pediatricians to emphasize the importance of fluoridation with their patients.
- ☐ Write letters of support.
- ☐ Refer to strategy checklist to build a coalition.
- ☐ Review advocacy methods and policy development.

Fluoridation Management

The fluoridation of public water systems is managed in California by two of its organizations:

- The Division of Drinking Water (DDW) of the State Water Resources Control Board provides technical and engineering expertise to public water systems for permitting and operating fluoridation systems. DDW is the regulatory agency and responsible for assuring fluoridation systems are optimally fluoridating the water supplies to provide dental health benefits.
- The Office of Oral Health (OOH) within the Center for Healthy Communities Branch of the California Department of Public Health, provides scientific, technical, and health related expertise to communities interested in fluoridating their drinking water supplies. The California Department of Public Health is responsible for helping local communities to identify funds to support community water fluoridation for public water systems.

California water systems that are fluoridated

The names of the fluoridated water districts, together with those providing a mixture of Fluoridated and Non-Fluoridated Water, by county can be found at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html

Additional Resources

Best Practice Approaches for State and Community Oral Health Programs - ASTDD

The website of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors provides more detailed information on fluoridation.

Available at https://www.astdd.org/bestpractices/BPAFluoridation.pdf (accessed December 13, 2019).

National Association of County and City Health Officials: https://www.naccho.org/programs/community-health/community-water-fluoridation

DentaQuest Foundation: https://fluoridationtoolkit.org

Campaign for Dental Health: https://ilikemyteeth.org/fluoridation-toolkit-resource-health-advocates/

Frameworks Institute: https://www.frameworksinstitute.org (accessed October 16, 2021)

Public Health England: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-oral-health-community-water-fluoridation-toolkit

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center https://www.mchoralhealth.org/highlights/water-fluoridation.php

American Water Works Association (AWWA)'s Public Communications Toolkit: https://drinktap.org/Water-Info/Questions-About-Water/Fluoride-In-Water (accessed September 21, 2021)

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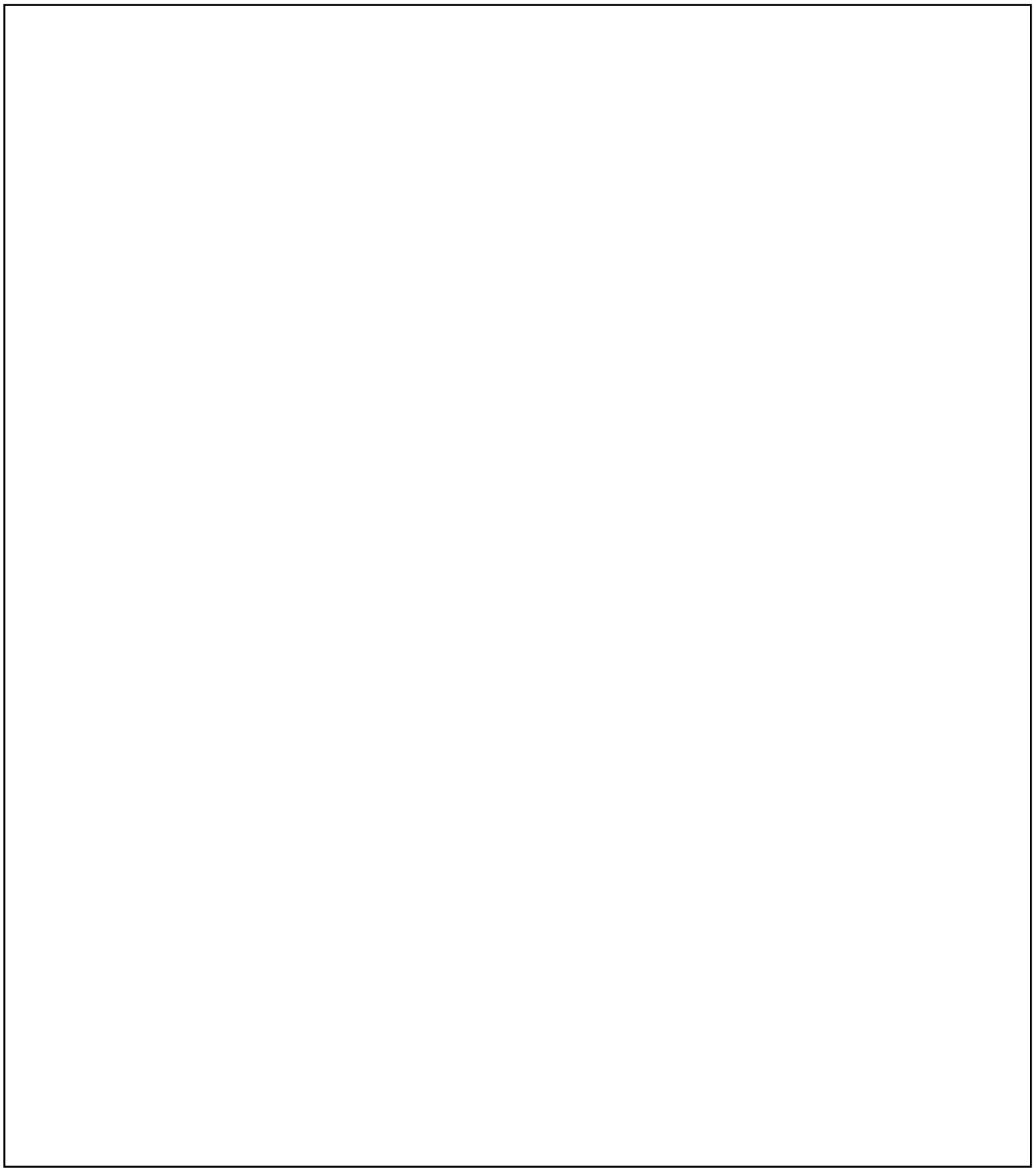
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Notes





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