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GAVIN NEWSOM  
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**DATE:** September 12, 2023

**TO:** Local Oral Health Programs

**SUBJECT:** Updating the Community Oral Health Needs Assessment  
Objective 1, Activity 1.2, Work Plan 2022 - 2027

A community oral health needs assessment (NA) refers to a state, tribal, local, or territorial health assessment that identifies key health needs and issues through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis.

As a legacy program, you should update your NA every 3 years.<sup>1</sup> The NA results will inform the community health improvement plan (or CHIP). Therefore, the first step will be to update your NA and use the results to update and inform your CHIP. The NA identifies resources, oral health problems, and gaps in care. The results will define priority areas, objectives, and strategies of the CHIP.

You should consider combining your NA with your Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ), community hospital, Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health program (MCAH), or other community-based organization (CBO). Please notify your Program Consultant (PC) with information about your community partner if your county is considering a combined NA. When you are developing a combined NA, please include the Office of Oral Health (OOH) approved oral health questions listed below.

**Questions:**

1. How would you describe the condition of this child's teeth? (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor)
2. During the Past 12 Months, has this child had frequent or chronic difficulty with any of the following?  
Toothaches – Yes or No  
Bleeding Gums – Yes or No  
Decayed teeth or cavities – Yes or No

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<sup>1</sup> LOHPs are not required to rewrite the summary report submitted in 2017-2022 cycle. Add to the report or revise the report with the new data that has been collected and analyzed.



3. During the Past 12 Months, did this child see a dentist or other oral health care provider for any kind of dental or oral health care?

If yes, during the Past 12 Months, did this child see a dentist or other oral health care provider for PREVENTIVE dental care, such as check-ups, dental cleanings, dental sealants, or fluoride treatments?

If yes, during the Past 12 Months, what PREVENTIVE dental service(s) did this child receive?

Source: [Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health](#)

The Public Health Accreditation board defines *community health needs assessment* as a systematic examination of the health status indicators for a given population that is used to identify key problems and assets in a community. For our purposes, the focus is specifically on the oral health of the community. The ultimate goal of a community oral health NA is to develop strategies to address the community's oral health needs and identified issues. A variety of tools and processes may be used to conduct a community health assessment; however, the essential ingredients are community engagement and collaborative participation.

The oral health NA Summary Report should include but is not limited to the following:

- Demographics of population
- Medi-Cal utilization- annual dental visit/preventive dental visit
- Measure of oral health status (caries, untreated caries)
- Assess availability of dental services (number of dentists, dentists that accept Medi-Cal, dental clinics, dental shortage areas)
- Assess community water fluoridation (CWF)
- Identify data gaps
- Identify populations of concern
- Assess Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) (results, participation, and the number of reporting schools/districts)
- Assess school-based services & opportunities
- Identify disparities
- Indicate changes and improvements since prior assessment

A finalized community oral health NA Summary Report will:

1. Identify the essential resources that are already available within the community.
2. Identify the essential resources missing.
3. Determine how best to use, develop, or obtain those resources.

## Why Complete an Assessment and Improvement Plan?

A community oral health assessment gives organizations comprehensive information about the community's current oral health status, needs, and issues. This information can help develop a community health improvement plan (CHIP) by justifying how and where resources should be allocated to best meet community needs.

Benefits include:

- Improved organizational and community coordination and collaboration
- Increased knowledge about public health and the interconnectedness of activities
- Strengthened partnerships within state and local public health systems
- Identified strengths and weaknesses to address in quality improvement efforts
- Baselines on performance to use in preparing for accreditation
- Benchmarks for public health practice improvements

## Resources:

[Principles to Consider for the Implementation of a Community Health Needs Assessment Process CDC-pdf\[PDF – 457KB\]External](#) (June 2013), Sara Rosenbaum, JD, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services, Department of Health Policy.

Turnock B. *Public Health: What It Is and How It Works*. Jones and Bartlett, 2009, as adapted in [Public Health Accreditation Board Acronyms and Glossary of Terms Version 1.0 CDC-pdf\[PDF – 536KB\]External](#), July 2011.

## Further Information:

For questions regarding this guidance, please email [dentaldirector@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:dentaldirector@cdph.ca.gov) or your program consultant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jayanth Kumar".

Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH  
State Dental Director  
Office of Oral Health