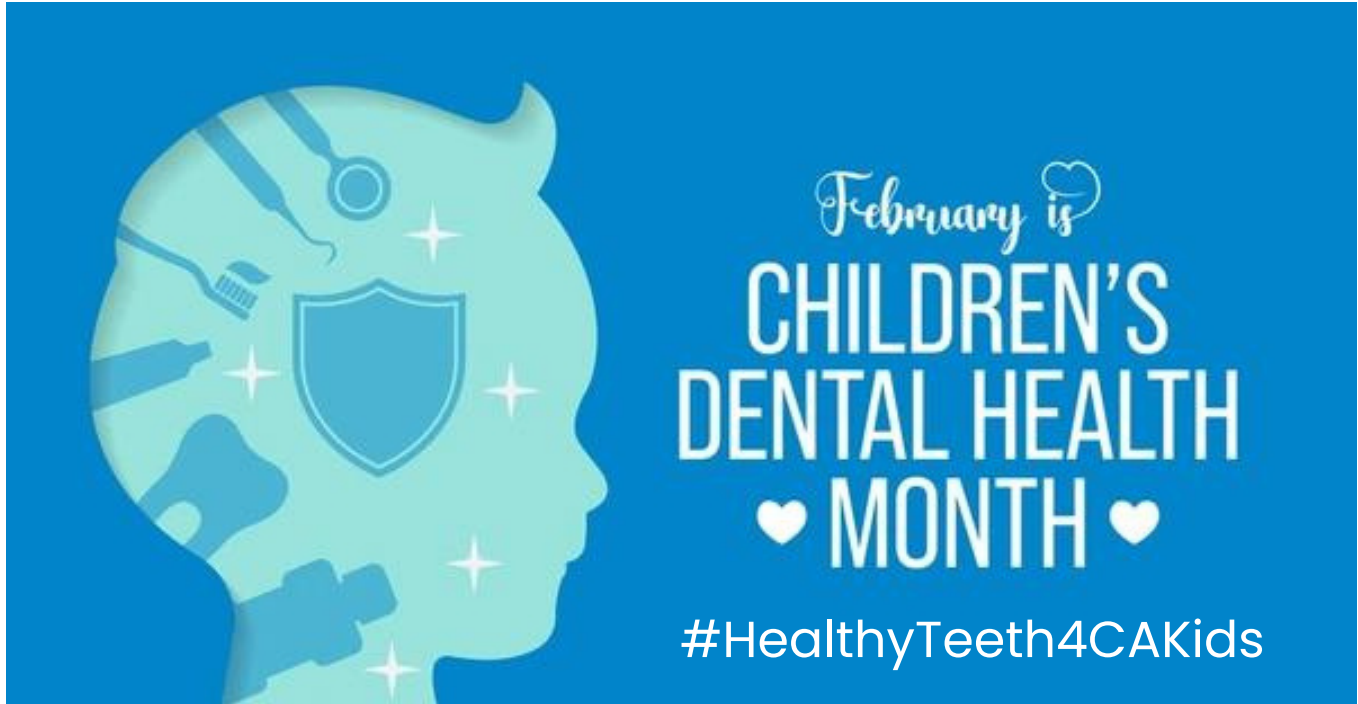


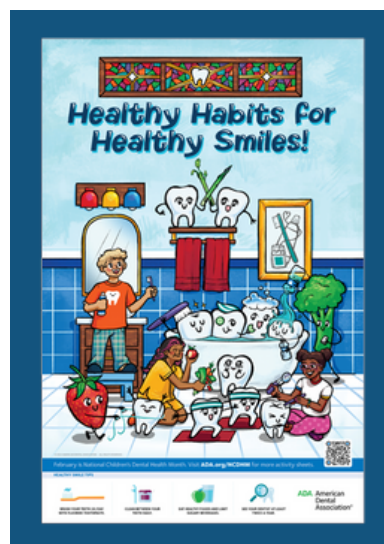


# ORAL HEALTH BYTES

A Newsletter For Local Oral Health Programs



Every **February**, the United States observes National Children's Dental Health Month, a nationwide initiative dedicated to promoting oral health and overall well-being among children. The primary focus of this month-long campaign, sponsored by the ADA, is to raise awareness about the significance of dental health in a child's life, educate parents and caregivers about proper oral care practices, and encourage children to develop good oral hygiene habits from an early age. The theme for 2024 is *Healthy Habits for Healthy Smiles*.



## **NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH IS CRUCIAL FOR SEVERAL REASONS:**

1. **Prevention of Dental Issues:** Early dental education helps prevent common oral health problems in children, such as cavities and gum disease. By instilling good oral hygiene practices from an early age, we can reduce the likelihood of these issues.
2. **Promotion of Overall Health:** Dental health is closely linked to overall well-being. Poor oral health can lead to various health problems, including heart disease and diabetes. By prioritizing children's oral health, we are also promoting their general health.
3. **Education:** This campaign provides valuable information to parents, caregivers, and educators about the proper methods for maintaining a child's oral health. Knowledge is a powerful tool in preventing dental issues. By making dental care fun and informative, it encourages kids to develop good habits that will benefit them throughout their lives.

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Our partners have contributed information and resources to help you raise awareness in your communities about the important role oral health plays in a child's future. Read on for ideas, tips, and resources.

National Children's Dental Health Month is an opportunity to engage communities through American Dental Association campaign (ADA campaign) to raise awareness and encourage healthy habits in children and their caregivers. This is a unique opportunity to create new connections and partnerships, advocate for children's oral health, and gain more support for your programs.

As we were reminded in the CPEHN Project Director's Meeting focused on health equity in November, adopting a health equity lens helps us promote resources that are accessible by all in our communities. Some equity-informed approaches to practice during National Children's Dental Health Month include translating materials to the languages spoken in our communities, using culturally-informed materials, and engaging our communities and community-based organizations that are representative of our local populations throughout the process (e.g., in choosing or creating the materials and in the dissemination plan of an oral health campaign).

# Links to Key Contents

\*Click the images below to learn more!

\*Click  at the bottom of each page to return to content page.

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## Resources by Partners



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## Additional Resources

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[Tips - Good Sleep Habits](#)



[OOH Staff Spotlight](#)



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## Resources

COHTAC provides a variety of [oral health education](#) materials, including some bilingual (English and Spanish) resources, by age group ([pregnancy](#), [infants 0-1](#), [toddlers 1-4](#), [kids 5-12](#), and [teens 13-17](#)), for [toothbrushing and flossing](#), links to [activities/games/pintable materials](#), and other [infographics](#) that you can use for promotion and education. We also have links to the new bilingual (English and Spanish) [2024 ADA materials](#), a [social medial toolkit to raise awareness about KOHA](#) from Children Now, and several other [communication resources to support KOHA](#).

Also check out [CDC's Children's Dental Health Month Newsletter](#) and [mychildrensteeth.org](#) for educational materials by the American Association of Pediatric Dentists



### How to use the resources

COHTAC's December Share & Learn was focused on how to strategically use these resources for National Children's Dental Health Month. You can find more information on the [event page on COHTAC's website](#), including a link to the recording, but we would like to share some key takeaways here:

1. Amplify our work across the state with a California-specific hashtag and limit the use of hashtags to around 1-3. Please use [#HealthyTeeth4CAKids](#) in your social posts!
2. Create a toolkit with sample messages to make it as easy as possible for partners to "plug-and-go" with clear instructions and a selection of messages and visuals. Note: COHTAC will be working with OOH and LOHPs on a landing page for you to share with partners – stay tuned!
3. In reaching out to traditional media partners, craft a pitch with these key ingredients: what's new, focus on your local angle, be explicit about why your message matters, and provide something tangible that you can offer (e.g., bringing in guests for a show or finding experts to quote).

As always, reach out to [COHTAC](#) with any questions or suggestions, and keep an eye on our website for [upcoming webinars](#).



## Love Your Teeth, Love Your Dental Benefit: Help Members Celebrate National Children's Dental Health Month

Medi-Cal provides free or low-cost dental services to children and adults. In honor of National Children's Dental Health Month, let's emphasize the importance of scheduling regular dental check-ups for our little ones. Early visits not only prevent tooth decay but also establish positive oral care habits from an early age.

Families are encouraged to celebrate the milestone of their child's first tooth by scheduling their first dental visit by their first birthday. Introducing dental care early on establishes the foundation for a lifetime of healthy habits. For families without a designated dental home, it is crucial to connect them with a dental provider. The "[Find A Dentist](#)" tool on SmileCalifornia.org simplifies this process, assisting families in locating a Medi-Cal dental provider in their area.

### **Empowering Families: Resources for National Children's Dental Health Month**

To help you spread the message of NCDHM and preventive dental services covered by Medi-Cal, Smile, California is proud to offer an array of educational tools such as [flyers](#), [videos](#), [PowerPoint presentations](#), [social media posts](#), [email signatures](#), [website banners](#), and more. Click below to visit the webpages and boost your outreach efforts.

[English NCDHM Website](#)

[Spanish NCDHM Website](#)

### **Celebrating 1 Million "Find A Dentist" Clicks and a Year of Dental Wellness Achievements!**

Thanks to valuable partners like you, Smile, California is thrilled to announce surpassing 1 million "[Find A Dentist](#)" button clicks. This achievement highlights our collective success in connecting Medi-Cal members to essential dental providers! Thank you for being a vital part of the journey towards better oral health for all Californians.

To stay informed about the NCDHM promotion and the Smile, California campaign, [sign up for our Smile Alerts](#).

## Calendar of Events

<b>January 18, 2024</b>	COHTAC Share and Learn – School Dental Program Resources
<b>January 31, 2024</b>	Progress Report 3 due to Program Consultants
<b>February 7, 2024</b>	PDM virtual session 1 (10am-12pm)
<b>February 14, 2024</b>	PDM virtual session 2 (10am-12pm)
<b>February 19, 2024</b>	President's Day (state observed holiday)



## School Dental Program Corner

This new section will be dedicated to communicating timely updates and resources to help advance and accomplish Local Oral Health Program's goals and objectives for school dental programs to advance the Moving California Forward Work Plan 2022-2027.

Updates from the School Dental Program Workgroup.

[School Dental Workgroup connection to California Oral Health Plan :](#)

**Goal 1:** Improve the oral health of Californians by addressing determinants of health and promote healthy habits and population-based prevention interventions to attain healthier status in communities.

**Goal 2:** Align dental health care delivery systems, payment systems, and community programs to support and sustain community-clinical linkages for increasing utilization of dental services.

The California Oral Health Partnership has 6 regular workgroups (California Fluoridation Advisory Committee, School Dental Programs, Improving Community Oral Health, Policy, Communication & Oral Health Literacy, and Evaluation & Performance), and 2 ad hoc workgroups (Decreasing Dental-related Emergency Room Visits and Leveraging CHW Benefit for Oral Health).

Overarching goals for 2023-2024 school year:

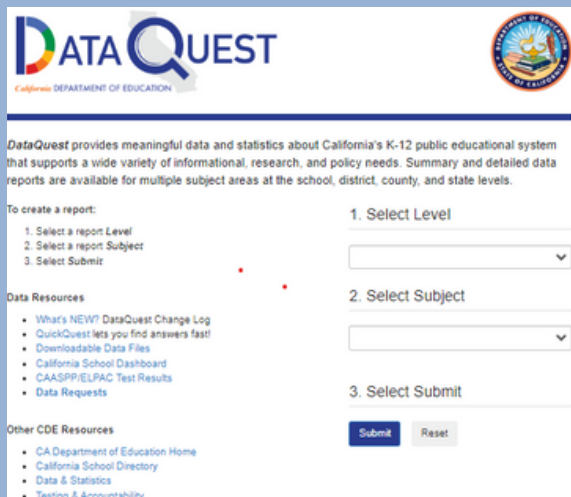
1. Focus: pre-school to 3rd grade
2. Strategy for focus grades includes but not limited to:
  - Oral Health Education for all focus grades
  - Toothbrushing in early childhood care and education settings/pre-schools
  - Oral Health Screening: Kinder, 2nd and 3rd
  - Sealants: 2nd and 3rd
  - Electronic dental referral management system for all focus grades

3. Share curated new and updated best practices, tools, and resources state-wide to implement activities related to school dental programs
4. Implement KOHA
5. Measure performance
6. Develop the school dental programs resources Matrix. This matrix describes our current actions and future goals around curating new and updated best practices, tools, and resources.

## Health Equity

All activities are intended to support the desired outcome of a 50% reduction in oral health disparities among school-aged children in California by 2030. Eligible schools include all rural schools and urban schools with >50% students participating in the FRPM and supports the desired outcome of a 50% reduction in oral health disparities among school-aged children.

### CDE – Data Quest



This is a tool to help you identify and prioritize school districts and/or schools that have >50% of free and reduced-price meals.

### Steps for **Data Quest**.

1. Select Level: From drop down menu select your **County**.
2. Select Subject: From drop down menu scroll to **Other Reports**, select **Free and Reduced Price Meals**.
3. Click **Submit** bottom.
4. Select school year, click **Submit**.
5. Select **Free and Reduced Price Meal – County summary (with district data)**, click **Submit**.



## Want to improve your KOHA data?



The OOH and COHTAC have teamed-up to provide trainings for LOHPs to improve their collection and reporting of KOHA data. The trainings use the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework to engage the community by developing quality improvement tools to build relationships with schools and staff.

Starting in the Spring of 2023, seventeen LOHPs participated in a training called: the RBA Learning Collaborative.

Through these Collaboratives, the LOHPs met regularly to establish peer-to-peer collaboration, develop a process map on their KOHA reporting into SCOHR, understand the KOHA data using Excel, participate in a SWOT analysis (Turn the Curve session), and develop a county-specific infographic to increase their KOHA data reporting and engagement.

Here's what one LOHP said about the RBA training: "Sharing our experiences [with other LOHPs], realizing we all have common issues, and seeing how people are working through them was so helpful." Want to hear more? Here's a short video with [more comments from LOHPs](#) who participated in the Collaborative.

We are planning to offer an RBA training in 2024. For those who complete the 101 RBA training, we will provide access to the Clear Impact software and a personalized scorecard that has pre-populated KOHA data for your LOHP for the past seven years (2016–2023). We will have a limited number of slots, so let us know you want to participate by sending an email to [oralhealthsupport@ucsf.edu](mailto:oralhealthsupport@ucsf.edu).

You can also stop by our new [RBA webpage](#) or [Slack channel](#) (for LOHPs only), or see how the Collaborative ties into your LOHP [Work Plan activities for Objective 3](#).

Sign up today to [get on the list](#) for the Spring 2024 RBA Learning Collaborative. It will change the way you look at data.



## Resources from Head Start

### **Happiness begins with a healthy smile** ([Happiness Begins with a Healthy Smile | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](#))



In this webinar, Sesame Street in Communities and an oral health expert present four key messages to share with families to keep children healthy and ready to learn.

### **Building Healthy Habits** ([Building Healthy Habits with Sesame Street in Communities | ECLKC \(hhs.gov\)](#))

#### Building Healthy Habits with Sesame Street in Communities



Routines are key to keeping healthy! Everyday routines are building blocks for learning healthy habits and reaching developmental milestones. Brushing teeth, washing hands, eating well, and exercising every day helps everyone grow and thrive. Preventive visits, such as well-child and dentist checkups, give families the support, information, and care they need to help children stay well. This webinar highlights how Head Start staff can support children and families in developing healthy habits using resources from Sesame Street in Communities.

## Developing Good Sleep Habits: 7 Tips for Parents of Toddlers

Having a regular bedtime routine helps children know what to expect at the end of the day. In addition to establishing a calm approach for putting a child to bed, a structured nighttime routine is beneficial for:

- Preventing tooth decay by brushing the child's teeth with fluoride toothpaste.
- Improving language development by reading aloud to the child.
- Promoting positive social and emotional development by spending time with the child while reading.

Sleeping better is a healthy habit that can lead to healthy smiles. [Toddler Bedtime Trouble: 7 Tips for Parents – HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/parents/toddler-bedtime-trouble-7-tips-for-parents)



### OOH Spotlight: Steven Starr

Steven is one of the original OOH members, joining in September 2017, when the team was called the Oral Health Program. His primary role is being OOH's communications lead, which includes review and approval of all the LOHP's media campaigns and outreach materials, as well as serving as the OOH's website guru – creating new pages, posting materials onto existing pages, and ensuring all the content is ADA compliant.

He is also a program consultant for 10 LOHPs and plays an integral role in developing the OOH project director meetings, including the June 2023 Summit, which was the OOH's first in-person event in four years. Outside of work Steven is an avid photographer and mixed media artisan. He loves to travel but when at home, he is usually relaxing in his amazing back yard or spoiling his two fur kids: Patches (dog) and Bosley (cat).



## LOHP Spotlight: San Bernardino County



San Bernardino County in Southern California is the largest county in the United States by land area and has varied landscapes from mountains to deserts to urban cities. With nearly 2.2 million residents, the county is incredibly diverse with a wide array of cultures and celebrated traditions.

The geographic expanse of the county presents unique challenges including transportation barriers and disparities in access to healthcare, education, and other essential services.

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's Local Oral Health Program, known locally as Smile San Bernardino County or Smile SBC, has been working diligently with its partners since 2018 to address the challenges that impact oral health knowledge and access to care. This includes expanding oral health programs in elementary schools, integrating oral health into community service programs, developing comprehensive tools to gather data for reporting and program planning, and developing materials to improve knowledge and connection to services.

In 2023, Smile SBC and First 5 San Bernardino received a National Association of Counties (NACo) award for their National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) collaborative, bilingual campaign, "Little Teeth, Big Responsibility". This annual awareness campaign targets caregivers in underserved and vulnerable populations to raise awareness about the importance of early childhood dental care.

Through the alignment of the two programs' priorities for children ages zero to five years of age and through the leveraging of each program's strengths and resources, the campaign has consistently surpassed industry standards for audience engagement and boosts visits to Smile SBC's Find a Dentist webpage. The campaign also provides an excellent opportunity to involve county leaders in oral health efforts, including the County Board of Supervisors, various department directors, commissioners, school district administration, and school principals.

In February 2023, these County leaders helped to support a media event for the campaign at an elementary school to spotlight the school district's exceptional commitment to provide oral health services for their students and to further spread the message about the importance of supporting programs that improve the oral health of children.