The OOH would like to share information put together by Somayeh Bolourchi. Somayeh is a health planner with Santa Clara County Oral Health Program. The following information was provided by Somayeh as her experience (and success!) collaborating with District Nurses. Somayeh shared that it did take time but in the end it was worth it. “I started working with this program in August 2019, and it wasn’t until August 2020 that we had our breakthrough moment. The below recommendations are based on what worked for Santa Clara County.”

1. Leading up to the “breakthrough” moment, we presented about KOHA to the superintendents and assistant superintendents – however, not much occurred after the presentation in terms of response and action.
2. Partnerships are so crucial! We collaborate closely with our Dental Society- and their project coordinator, Michael, told us about a “meeting” where all the District Nurses meet on a monthly basis. He was able to help us book a meeting with the head Nurse at the time, to provide a brief presentation about KOHA. This was in March, right before the Shelter in Place Order. Thus, it was informative, but not much action as a result… after this either.
3. Michael, from Dental Society, stressed to me at the time that the District Nurses are often overwhelmed, overworked, and have many things on their plate, which is why they are often hesitant to collaborate with the County. I had this in mind and understood the challenges. However, while, I was at the District meeting in March, I noticed that one of my colleagues from Santa Clara County Immunization Program was present at the meeting! This was huge! She was a trusted person that attended their meetings consistently, and due to all the requirements surrounding immunization, and that schools can lose funding if they do not submit their immunization data to the State, she had to work very closely with them. Thus – huge – collaborate with your County’s Immunization Program to get in. Despite all our previous presentations, that relationship truly helped me.
4. When the Pandemic started – I felt that we were back at square 1…the fear of COVID-19, the school closures, it was all very overwhelming for everyone. Thus, with the help of Michael from Dental Society (he had the list of emails from the District Meetings), I drafted a letter and sent it to the Nurses, offering my support and our program’s support. To be honest, as hard as we worked on the letter, not much response and action came after…
5. I reached out to Esther, my longtime colleague, and she was the program specialist for Immunization. I asked her if she could help me get on the agenda for the school district Nurses. She helped connect me to their new head nurse, and it took about 3-4 follow ups on my end, to finally get a response! And I was finally put on the agenda on August 26th, 2020, during their virtual District Nurse Meeting!
6. Prior to this meeting, another huge moment that defined everything was getting access to SCOHR! That was so helpful, and it was HUGE! If your program currently does not have access to SCOHR, if you don’t have a County SCOHR user, I truly recommend getting one ASAP. Once I had access to SCOHR, I put together a spreadsheet with details about which schools (priority schools, based on their free and reduced-price meals percentage) had reported data into SCOHR in the past 5 years. I found that many schools had not entered, but a lot of schools had as well. This knowledge really helped pave the way into the schools. I also put together a spreadsheet of all the current users in SCOHR, for each District.
7. This was gold. I put together a presentation, providing a brief training on SCOHR, the importance of KOHA, the importance of their efforts, and I also used the opportunity to kindly call out the schools that had not entered data, while expressing that we know that Nurses are overworked, and we truly appreciate all efforts. This was just a gentle reminder to enter data.
8. This was the breakthrough moment!
9. Soon after the meeting, my inbox with flooded with emails from the District Nurses about updating their user accounts and passwords in SCOHR, since many had retired or were no longer working at the District. I updated their accounts and recorded it in the spreadsheet.
10. It took a lot of patience, gentle follow up, kindness and empathy to build a relationship with the Nurses. My major recommendations: 1) Get in touch with Immunization and see if they attend any of the meetings or know a point person in the schools. 2) Get a SCOHR account – it creates a sense of accountability, since we can now “track” who is entering and who is not.
11. Throughout the year, I created an inventory of dental resources and handouts, that I can gladly share with you as well, that I provided to the Nurses. I also shared our KOHA flyers we created, and I also surveyed the Nurses to understand their progress and challenges.
12. I also reached out every month to just keep the relationship fresh and offer my support.
13. Lastly, based on my updated SCOHR spreadsheet, I provide gentle reminders to schools that have still not entered, this is something I am going to work on again, since there were still a few schools that were missing 2019-2020 data. Then I will start pushing after July 1st for 2020-2021 data.

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