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*Louisiana Statewide Oral Health Coalition Meeting Minutes  
Friday, January 31, 2020  
LDH Bienville Building 628 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street Room 173, Baton  
Rouge, LA 70802*

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The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. and introductions were done. Coalition chair, Sue Catchings, welcomed attendees and thanked them for attending.

**Oral Health Progress & Equity Network (OPEN) Update/Activity – Lisa Staples and Celeste Terry**

Packets were provided to attendees regarding the OPEN Network. One pager was included explaining how to join socius, how to join the Louisiana state page, and how to pin work on the virtual map. These three documents are included in the minutes as handouts. Lisa emphasized the importance of joining and connecting with oral health advocates from around the country. Louisiana's page only had four members at that time. Coalition members were able to use their phones or laptops to visit the OPEN Network and start setting up the socius pages: <http://www.oralhealth.network/>. Lisa is working with the Rural Health Network and focused on Allen, Evangeline and Avoyelles parishes.

Celeste reported on attending Hill Day and meeting with Louisiana members of Congress, asking them to add dental to Medicare and pregnant women programs. She also said that there was an OPEN virtual town hall meeting September 2019 that was successful and plans were in the works to have another one in the Spring 2020. She will invite the Coalition members.

**Special Announcements – Annette Droddy, LDA**

- Give Kids A Smile Day 2020 – The Coalition planned an event for Buchanan Elementary School. Toothbrushes were going to be handed out and a hygienist was invited to provide oral health education to the children. Various dentists/dental components around the state were planning their own GKAS events, including the one organized by Sue and various Greater Baton Rouge area dentists. Shreveport was also planning an event for later in February. MeChaune asked that Coalition pass on information about any GKAS events that they are aware of happening.
- LA Mission of Mercy – The LDA Foundation has moved forward with the planning for their Mission of Mercy (MOM) free dental clinic to be held August 2021 in Lafayette, La. (Subsequently due to fundraising concerns and national concern over pushing back MOM clinics, the LDA has moved the clinic to August 2022, still in Lafayette.

### **Miscellaneous Items for Discussion/Updates**

*2019 Oral Health Summit Evaluation – Sue Catchings.* Twenty-three surveys were collected. Sue presented the responses, which were all very positive. A complete report was included in the meeting packet.

*State Action Plan/New Work-group Direction – MeChaune Butler.* The new State Action Plan was presented to the group. MeChaune explained that work groups will convene regularly with chairs taking a greater responsibility for setting meetings, taking notes, and submitting information to the full Coalition. The overall goal is to getting work groups engaged and recommitted. She asked each workgroup to have a chair and co-chair to share some of the workload.

*2020 Oral Health Summit – Melissa Garcia.* The 2020 Oral Health Summit is set for Nov. 5-6, 2020, at Willis-Knighton Hospital in Shreveport. Melissa will be working with the planning committee to set up food sponsors, other sponsors, and volunteers. The theme will be related to health equity.

### **Partner Updates**

#### **LDH Medicaid Update**

- Brandon Bueche introduced the new Medicaid Dental Program Manager, Kevin Guillory. Kevin can be reached at [Kevin.Guillroy@la.gov](mailto:Kevin.Guillroy@la.gov) or 225-342-7476.
- The Dental Benefit Program Manager Request for Proposals is currently under evaluation. Because of the blackout period, LDH is unable to provide additional details. He also explained that LDH's Managed Care Organization (MCO) Request for Proposals is currently under protest. Emergency contracts are in place with the 5 incumbent MCOs to continue the delivery of health care to Louisiana Medicaid beneficiaries.

#### **LSU School of Dentistry**

- Dean Henry Gremillion provided the Coalition with an extensive update since Dr. Bob Barsley's passing in the Fall. LSUSD is well aware of the oral health needs of Louisiana citizens as recently highlighted by the Louisiana Board of Regents Response to Senate Resolution 190 of the Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature and further complemented by June 19, 2019, Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) designation from the Primary Care and Prevention Services HRSA Data Warehouse. Of the 64 parishes in Louisiana, 59 or over 90% are designated as geographic or low-income population dental HPSAs.
- It is clear that Louisiana's urban areas do not have a shortage of oral health professionals. Instead, there is a maldistribution of dentists across the state, particularly in rural communities. The basis for this inequity is complex and likely the result of a multiplicity of factors to include: student debt, lack of incentives for dentists to work in rural areas, and difficulties of establishing or sustaining private practices in these communities. Without question, there is a need to develop solutions that will specifically address the state's underserved populations. How can this be accomplished in the most cost-effective and expeditious manner possible?
- One such solution is currently materializing through the collaborative effort between LSU Health School of Dentistry, LSU Health New Orleans, Louisiana Dental Association, and the University of Louisiana system. The Louisiana Department of Health has approved a State Plan Amendment related to dental care, which provides full Medicaid pricing (FMP) for dental services. This

initiative will result in expansion of Medicaid oral health services with an increase in the number of community dentist providers throughout the state through affiliation with LSUSD. The intent of this program is to optimize and enhance the services available for Medicaid enrollees in Louisiana by working to achieve the following goals:

- a. Increase the percentage of Medicaid beneficiary-patients who receive preventative care;
  - b. Increase the number of Medicaid beneficiary-children who receive care; and
  - c. Increase the number of Medicaid beneficiary-children receiving care in Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas.
- This will have a positive statewide impact on the oral health care for this vulnerable population.
  - In addition, LSUSD has increased its Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.) class size in recent years. Until 2010 the entering dental class size was 60 students. Currently 75 students are enrolled in the entering class each year. Data from 2009 to date indicates that upon graduation our graduates entering general dental practice in Louisiana each year do so in an average of 17 parishes in the state. With only five parishes in Louisiana that are *not* Dental HPSAs this dispersal of oral health professionals is broadening the scope of access to oral health care. This increase in class size will in time help to alleviate the shortage of dentists in rural areas within Louisiana.
  - LSUSD has made considerable progress in establishing the framework for the Rural Scholars Track (RST) initiative, which aims to increase the number of dentists who practice in rural Louisiana Dental HPSA areas to increase patient access to high quality oral health care. Participant students are obligated to serve one year for every year of tuition waiver provided in a rural HPSA Area. The committee does make a strong effort to identify students who will remain in underserved areas for years to come. In 2016, in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health, Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health, a HRSA grant was awarded to help launch the RST program at LSUSD and offset the costs of the first three tuition waivers. The Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health continues to collaborate with key partners with the full support of the State Oral Health Office to conduct this work. The goal is to enlist eight RST students in an academic year once the program is fully established. LSUSD is raising an endowment to offset the tuition waivers for the selected students, and to date, the school has secured \$1.6 million with a goal of \$5 million.
  - Dental care to underserved children in Louisiana recently received significant support through a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation (BCBSLAF). LSUSD will be a participant in the school-based program funded with \$300,000 from BCBSLAF and administered by Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) across the state. The grant will provide free dental screenings, sealants, and fluoride varnish treatments as well as primary health care education to 3,600 children in underserved rural areas.
  - It is the strong desire of the leadership of LSU Health New Orleans and the LSU Health School of Dentistry to expand our network of clinical services and educational experiences for our students throughout the state as suggested in the report to the Board of Regents. The most practical and cost-effective approach would be to establish satellite Advanced Education in General Dentistry, General Practice Residency or other programs such as pediatric dentistry at strategic locations around the state that would qualify for Graduate Medical Education funding in pre-existing health care facilities. This approach would provide for increased access to oral

health care services for the vulnerable populations. LSUSD has previously engaged in discussions focused on collaborative relationships to further this initiative. However, outside factors have stifled the process. We are most interested in resurrecting this initiative.

- Equally important, it is recognized that the LSU Health School of Dentistry is firmly established and well respected on a local, state, and national level, thereby securing a vital public trust and being viewed as a valuable state resource. LSUSD educates the future oral health workforce, conducts dental research, informs communities of the importance and value of good oral health, and provides oral health care services and serves as the dental home to thousands of citizens of the State of Louisiana. State funding for the school has been dramatically reduced by approximately 50% since 2009. The cost of provision of dental education beyond bricks and mortar is one of the highest among all health care disciplines that cannot be covered by tuition alone.

### **Louisiana Dental Association**

- LDA Executive Director Ward Blackwell reiterated several of the items Dr. Gremillion mentioned, including the potential for the FMP program to expand Medicaid dental services. Ward also explained that the association is working to have the restorative increases implemented to the dental Medicaid program. The LDA was able to secure additional funding during the 2019 Legislative Session but the approval for the increases to certain restorative codes was taking longer than expected. These increases, along with the FMP program, would ideally bring Medicaid payments somewhat closer to being in line with private pay patients allowing more dentists to participate in the dental Medicaid program.
- The LDA, the LA State Board of Dentistry, and the LA Primary Care Association are looking into teledentistry for FQHCs. A grant has allowed LPCA to purchase some of the equipment already for primary care physicians so dentistry could use the same equipment. Teledentistry should not preclude a patient from establishing a Dental Home. Teledentistry would be part of the initial screening and then a patient would be given a list of private practice dentists and FQHCs in the area who they can see and/or who take Medicaid so that the patient would have a Dental Home.
- Ideally, schools with 50% or more of kids who are on reduced lunch or FQHCs who are not fully staffed by dentists would be the target for hygienists to be able to use teledentistry in order to place sealants on kids in the schools and take x-rays. Additionally, the school would need to be in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). All but 5 parishes in Louisiana are designated as either a geographic or poverty HPSA. A HPSA score of 15 means there are not enough providers within a certain geographic area (many rural areas) or at a certain poverty level.
- Ward also announced that he would be leaving the LDA to become executive director of the Pennsylvania Dental Association. MeChaune thanked Ward for his many years of service to dentistry and to the Coalition. Ward had worked for the LDA for 23 years in various roles.

### **Workgroup Activity**

Workgroups met to review the recent published State Action Plan. Strategies that aligned with each group were assessed and plans for achieving these goals will begin within coming weeks. Each group will also determine ongoing communication schedules to work toward their individualized plans.

- **Prevention (Dental Sealant Work-group):** This information was reported out during the WAL OHP updates. Secured (3) MOU's for expanding school sealant programs in dental HPSAs across the state. The group last met in September 2019. Current work includes increasing workgroup diversity to ensure certain organizations are represented; collaborating with the Policy Workgroup to support the movement of a teledentistry rule change which is expected to go before the LDA House of Delegates in March; and implementing as SSP pilot within one identified parish in spring 2021. The next meeting to be scheduled in April TBD.
- **Fluoride/Fluoridation Workgroup:** Chair, Jay Ray, and co-chairs, Liz Smith and Thanh Nguyen, decided to meet every 2 months via a conference call. They discussed webinars on community water fluoridation and fluoride varnish. Jay reported that 11 fluoridation inspections had been performed since the last meeting.
- **Workforce Workgroup:** Chair, Ward Blackwell reminded the Coalition that a new Workforce chair would be needed since he is moving to Pennsylvania. The work group wanted to assist in getting the word out on various programs such as the Rural Scholars Track, loan repayment, rural tax credits, etc. They would also like to obtain a list of parishes with no dentists. Additionally, they would also be interested in inquiring about the Dental Care Task Force and training programs for special needs populations.
- **Policy Workgroup:** Chair, Dr. Doug Cross, and co-chair, Celeste Terry, would also like to meet via conference call every two months. Their primary discussion related to teledentistry.

#### Other News and Updates

- Terence Robinson, Epidemiologist from Well-Ahead LA reported that he is working with Dr. Doug Cross and Excelth to look at oral health outcomes and comparing data from the Baton Rouge and New Orleans LaMOM dental clinics. Trends have emerged and they will present more information to the Coalition at a future meeting.
- Nicole Coarsey, also from Well-Ahead LA, said that they are looking at provider to patient ratio and will be updating 25 parishes HPSA designation. They are also updating the fluoridation maps. Her staff is also developing a recruitment video for health care providers in rural Louisiana. There will be a 5 minute version and a 30 second version. She also announced that over \$1 million in rural tax credits had been awarded to 32 dentists.
- Melissa Garcia is continuing to work with setting the coalition up as a 501(c)(3). She will be meeting with the officers in the next few weeks to move forward with this initiative.

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m.