

\$30M annual boost to state oral health program through CDA's advocacy efforts

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Five years after CDA developed a proposal to reduce barriers to dental care in California, several of the proposal's objectives have come to pass. Most notably was the 2015 installation of Jayanth Kumar, DDS, MPH as state dental director.

And now, thanks in part to the passage of Proposition 56, the tobacco tax measure supported by CDA and approved by voters last November, the state oral health plan that CDA and other stakeholders helped develop over the past year will receive a significant financial boost of \$30 million annually. This is a tenfold funding increase and the first time the program has ever had a dedicated revenue source.

These funds will be used to implement the state oral health plan through various means, including expanding the state oral health program, supporting local oral health programs, strengthening oral health surveillance and evaluation capacity, launching communication and health literacy initiatives and providing training and technical assistance. Specifically, funding awards totaling \$18 million of the \$30 million will be allocated to local health departments or jurisdictions with funding for future years anticipated to be at the same level, according to Kumar.

In early August, award letters were sent to the jurisdictions detailing the allocations, which will include base amounts plus additional funds calculated based on the estimated low-income population numbers for each area. In turn, those funds will be used to meet local oral health objectives, such as assessing the needs of schoolchildren and vulnerable population groups, developing an action plan to address oral health needs of the community and providing qualified professional expertise in dental public health for program direction to implement community water fluoridation and community-clinical linkage programs. Addressing common risk factors for chronic tobacco- and sugar-related diseases and working with partners and community organizations to promote oral health are other important objectives of local health jurisdictions.

As previously reported in the *Update*, CDA and its partners advocated internally and externally to ensure that Proposition 56 tobacco tax revenues were used as voters intended them to be used — to improve access to care for the 14 million Californians enrolled in the Medi-Cal program. This advocacy resulted in the \$30 million ongoing allocation to the state dental director's office and an initial state allocation of \$140 million for increased Denti-Cal provider rates.

- [Learn more](#) about how Proposition 56 funds are being used to improve access to dental care in California.

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