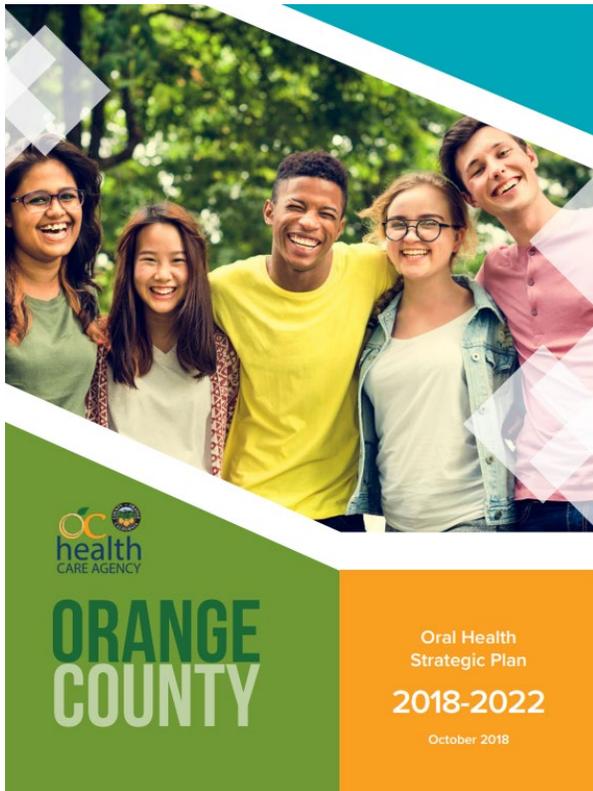


OC Health Care Agency Releases Oral Health Strategic Plan and Launches 'Smile Habits OC' Website



The Orange County Local Oral Health Program (OC-LOHP) was established within the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) with funding from the California Department of Public Health last January. The group was tasked with conducting a comprehensive oral health needs assessment and engaging stakeholders to develop a strategic oral health plan, which is now available at www.ochealthinfo.com/oralhealth.

The plan builds on the expertise of stakeholders across Orange County such as health care providers and clinicians, CalOptima, educational institutions, community based organizations, local governmental agencies, local coalitions and collaboratives and takes into consideration existing programs, policies, best practices and environmental factors.

Key findings include:

- While prevalence of untreated tooth decay has declined among children, many children still suffer from dental disease and disparities persist, affirming the need to focus on early prevention.
- Utilization of dental services by the Medi-Cal child population is low and varies significantly by age, with Orange County's youngest and oldest children utilizing services at a rate lower than their counterparts do.
- Utilization of services by Medi-Cal eligible children is higher than California average but falls short of statewide targets.
- Low-income adults lack awareness that Medi-Cal benefits cover dental care, while older adults face several barriers toward achieving optimal oral health including inability to pay for dental services.
- The needs assessment also uncovered gaps in data on the oral health of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and special health care needs.

To help address these issues, the OC-LOHP has launched a new website, www.SmileHabitsOC.org, to help the community to easily access material about oral health care. It provides essential information and resources to individuals of all ages and special populations on how to maintain their best oral health and access services in Orange County. Content is also available in Spanish at www.sp.smilehabitsoc.org.

“Oral health is a key component of an individual’s health throughout life, and good oral health means being free of tooth decay and gum disease as well as chronic oral pain and other conditions that affect the mouth and throat,” said **Dr. David Nuñez**, HCA’s Family Health Medical Director. “The website helps our community maintain good oral health by providing information that is accurate, accessible and actionable.”



The website gives users a way to easily access information about dental services, oral hygiene and healthy habits, nutrition, injury prevention, and substance use from any computer, tablet or smartphone.

To increase further awareness about the importance of oral health, a Smile Habits OC ad campaign is running on Orange County Transportation Agency buses on targeted routes in Orange County focusing on two key oral health messages: “Brush your teeth twice a day” and “See your dentist twice a year.”

The website and ad campaign were made possible through funds from Proposition 56, the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016, which allowed local health jurisdictions across California, including Orange County, to establish or expand local oral health programs.