



# Oral Health 2020: Why a Network Approach Works

## Networks as a Solution to Systemic Problems

*"If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

-African proverb

To create a world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy, we need to shape the systems that shape our health. We can only do this as a community.

Over the last decade, the Oral Health 2020 network has emerged from a nationwide conversation including policymakers, providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers acknowledging that the system of healthcare we have in place today is not working for people's overall health and wellbeing, and that it's time to work together to build a new future. The network enables agents of change to come together to create the changes we want to see and advance our shared oral health goals. Together, we work towards specific and measureable targets to hit by the year 2020.

Changing systems is incredibly hard work. Systems are often difficult to make visible, let alone to alter. They are collections of individual elements, linked together through multiple series of relationships that, in aggregate, form an overarching purpose that, neither those observing the system, or those within it, create with intention. Systems change requires the engagement of multiple stakeholders with diverse perspectives to develop the appropriate strategies to make change. OralHealth2020 has taken a network building approach to changing the oral health system by engaging health equity advocates, community-based organizations, providers, clinicians, policy makers, and health justice organizers to build alignment and coordinate efforts toward realizing a shared vision, as well as achieving articulated goals and targets.

## How the Network Functions

The Oral Health 2020 Network operates with an awareness of the complex relationships of its members, and works to foster opportunities to grow and deepen the connections and enhance the coordination of efforts across every level: grassroots, grassmiddles, and grasstops.

This OH 2020 Network is supported and managed by network infrastructure, including members from all levels of the network, responsible for seeking out new members and for cultivating the existing network. This is accomplished through a range of activities including: keeping members informed of network activities and progress, weaving existing members together, providing technical assistance and resources, and responding to emergent needs.

Members stay personally and virtually connected through a system of continuous communication, which includes the use of a collaborative platform (Socius), in-person and virtual convenings at the local, state, regional, and national levels, and other frequent interactions to build and strengthen authentic relationships. Network activities are driven by its members, and because of this collective empowerment, individual network members are better equipped to create large scale change.

Individually, we can make progress; together we transform the world.

## Join the Movement

*The Oral Health 2020 Network is putting the power for change back in the hands of people who share the same set of beliefs about every person's right to a healthy life.*

Join the diverse network of individuals and organizations at the local, state, and national level to ensure policy, financing, care and the community are aligned to promote oral health as an essential part of overall health and wellbeing. Here's how:

- Connect with a network member in your community or state
- Register for our virtual community at [oralhealthnetwork.org](https://oralhealthnetwork.org)
- Join us at our next meeting

The diversity of experiences, knowledge and skills of network members, coupled with a shared vision and purpose, create the opportunity for greater collective impact. Only by working together in this way can we shape a world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy.