

## Funders Oral Health Policy Group

*Thank you for  
attending the August  
FOHPG webinar!*

Thank you to everyone who joined us for another engaging and motivating convening! Below you will find notes from the discussion. You can also view the [meeting slides here](#) and a [recording of the meeting here](#).

If you haven't yet, please take a minute to fill out the [evaluation for the August FOHPG Member Webinar](#). We value your feedback!

Thank you Vanetta Abdellatif and Alison Mondri of Arcora Foundation for leading the discussion and bringing our guest speaker, Representative Marcus Riccelli!

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## August Webinar Notes

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## ARCORA FOUNDATION AND OUR COMMITMENT TO PARTNERSHIPS

- Philanthropy must address immediate needs and be strategic in this crisis.
- Pandemic Response: First round of giving: focused on food security, worked with established local nonprofits. That allowed them to give quickly to nonprofits who they knew would make sure the money was well spent. Arcora and Delta Dental of Washington committed more than \$350,000 to local food banks in April 2020.
- Second round of giving: focused on supporting existing grantee partners: community clinics, nonprofit and tribal clinics, etc. Recognized the importance of this social safety net for the people these clinics serve. Doubled down on giving to increase access.
- Realized flexibility was necessary to quickly address emerging needs and prioritize equity. Put together a simpler and straightforward grant process. Did not want to place the burden on grantees so made the process very easy for them.
- Removed reporting requirements, a change that has been greatly appreciated by grantees. Trust partners to spend the funds wisely. Allowed them to re-purpose funding for local needs. Provided more than \$4 million to grantees.
- Used a community-centered approach to identify emerging needs. Involved communities early in the process and worked with them to co-create messages, materials, and strategy. Shared decision making helped build trust with stakeholders in the community.
- Operational changes: roughly 75% of Arcora's funding goes to operations. Arcora operates DentistLink, a free referral service for anyone to connect with their dental provider for urgent dental care. By contracting with, and building relationships with, clinics and private practice dentists, they have been able to keep people away from hospitals.
- Equity has remained a priority for the organization. Health equity requires access to dental care for all. Activating advocates, building champions, and ensuring that policymakers hear from a diverse group of stakeholders. Arcora has not slowed down in their advocacy work.

- Important to not lose sight of long-term goals. Dental care for low-income people is still at risk. In Washington, more than 100,000 people were added to the Medicaid rolls in the last four months. Working to protect essential safety net programs for vulnerable populations who are already experiencing insecurity due to COVID-19.

The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a slide titled "Sustained Advocacy" is displayed. The slide contains the following bullet points:

- Focus on long-term goals
- Activate advocates
- Build champions
- Drive towards equity
- Key messages:
  - Oral health is essential to overall health
  - We must not turn away from those most in need
  - Health equity requires access to dental care for all

To the right of the slide is a portrait of a smiling Black man. On the far right, a grid of video thumbnails shows other participants in the meeting, with names like "Suzanne Mich...", "Jesse Wright", "Shay Wilson", "Betty Jones", "Marie Pineda", "Evan Nibbel", "Catherine", and "Zoea Pacheco" visible.

## HOW TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH POLICY OFFICIALS

- Primary focus for Arcora over the past few years has been preserving the adult dental benefit. Protecting the current Medicaid program from cuts and working to improve benefits (ex. covering SDF) and to expand coverage to excluded populations (ex. immigrant communities, pacific islander residents).
- Access to Baby & Child Dentistry program connects kids aged 0-5, on Medicaid, to dental care.
- Partnering with community health center system around advocacy for capital budget asks to expand dental clinic capacity. CHCs see about ½ of all Medicaid insured adults and 1/3 of Medicaid insured kids who have a dental visit.
- Prevention efforts: Educating communities on the dangers of sugary drinks and seeking opportunities at the city and state level to reduce consumption. Local-level advocacy for preserving areas with Community Water Fluoridation and expanding that. As well as working at the State level to establish policies supporting Community Water Fluoridation.

- Tips for identifying key policy officials:
    1. Research them: Look at which committees they sit on, who is in leadership. Online research: where they are from in the state, party, bills they have sponsored, voting history. Looking at bio: if they have a day job, their professional and volunteer history, news articles.
    2. Build relationships: Put in the time to develop authentic, two-way relationships with legislators. Use face to face interactions to ask about their background and find their connections to care. Look beyond the usual suspects, your strongest advocate may not be the most obvious one.
    3. Make yourself available as a resource. Provide data about folks in their district or statewide. Connect them to research, providers in their community. Sign-on to legislation priority legislation when appropriate. Look to build relationships with their staff as well.
    4. Sharing constituent and provider stories can be very powerful voice in terms of identifying areas of interest for policymakers. Sharing stories should be a collaborative effort, a lifting of constituents.
  - Requires an investment of time. Think long term and plan. It takes time to develop relationships and identify areas of passions that may overlap with your work.
  - Make a commitment to coalition work. Great way to keep tabs on what is happening in the state and it is an opportunity to show up for partners.
  - Crises can be opportunities and can open possibilities that may have been out of the question before. Public health infrastructure – there are opportunities now to be entrepreneurial and creative.
  - Example of successful policy partnership: Oral Health Connections Pilot. Pitched idea of an enhanced dental benefit for people with diabetes and pregnant people. Met with concern about price tag. Worked with Rep. Riccelli to scale down the idea to a 3-year pilot program. Secured funds to increase benefits for these groups and a better reimbursement rate for select services for participating providers. Arcora contracted with local coordination programs and worked with Medicaid managed care systems to identify and connect patients with providers. Lot of provider enthusiasm so far. Secured CMS approval for the pilot, partly due to modeling it on several components from their Baby and Child Dentistry Program.
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Identifying Key Policy Officials

- > Do your homework
- > Build relationships
- > Gather constituent stories

21 Aaron Pomeroy

The slide features a teal header with the title 'Identifying Key Policy Officials'. Below the title is a list of three bullet points: '> Do your homework', '> Build relationships', and '> Gather constituent stories'. To the right of the text is a photograph of the Washington State Capitol building. A green circular icon with a white telephone handset is positioned to the right of the slide. The slide is set against a black background with a green gradient at the bottom.

## MY ROAD TO BECOMING AN ORAL HEALTH CHAMPION FOR THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON STATE

- One person can make a difference. Representative Riccelli's discussion with Aaron Robert Kathman, a local community activist, started his interest in oral health.
- We must do better! Over 1.3 million Apple Health enrollees are not accessing their benefits. Kids of color are disproportionately not accessing care.
- Dental One Table: Got people together in the community to start discussing how to increase access, prevent dental disease, and serve populations experiencing the greatest disease burden. Put aside differences in opinion around oral health to come together and get as much as possible done. Prioritizing issues in the budget requires coalitions and groups to advocate for them.
- When looking for people, look to the committees and to the people they work with.
- Dental Clinic Capacity Grant Program: In the 2017-19 capital budget, the Legislature made historic investments in dental capacity for the underserved. \$16, 534,000 was invested in 23 dental projects at community health centers, clinics, a community center and two Hospital-Based Dental Residency Programs.

- As of Feb. 2020, 27,000 new patients and 164 new FTEs at community health centers. Expected long-term impact: Fewer expensive emergency room visits, fewer severe medical complications due to inadequate oral health care, point of entry for preventive medical and behavioral health services and new providers trained in community health settings and techniques.
- Project allowed dialing in on policy goals and investments, included enhanced benefits. Symbolic resolution to congress to include a dental benefit in Medicare. Examined creating a State Dental Director. Using power of coming together as a group to protect current benefits.
- COFA Dental Senate Bill 5274 - established a dental program for Compact of Free Association (COFA) islanders from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Driven by advocates, backed up by stakeholder table
- City Council is looking at putting water fluoridation on the ballot. Also, considering state-level effort.
- All health starts with oral health! Educators can be amazing advocates for dental – they see the impact of kids missing school due to dental issues.
- The backup of stakeholders does matter when getting this work done. Coalition building is an important strategy.

The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide is displayed with the following text:

**Drinking the Oral Health ~~Kool-Aid~~ Fluoride?**

**ALL HEALTH STARTS WITH ORAL HEALTH!**

- Oral health = Overall Health & Wellbeing
- Oral Disease is higher among people with low-incomes, populations of color and people with disabilities
- It effects everything we do from the jobs people can get to being able to focus in school.

On the right side of the screen, there is a grid of 12 video thumbnails showing various participants in the meeting. Some names are visible at the bottom of the grid, including "Stacy Wilson", "Jerry Wright", "Stacy Wilson", "Clare McDonald", "Amy Egan", "Cory's Heavens", and "Alba Nizel".

**MEMBER DISCUSSION**

- Help justify increased spending to policy makers by looking at what it means to take away access. What are the costs down the line if we take away care? Use national research to build loud, collective, and national

voice among legislators. Helps with convincing appropriation and authorizing committees. Looking for ways that you can match efforts goes a long way.

- Funders can support the State budget office to do data analysis in Dental.
  - Come in with information when you see authorities dragging their feet or if fiscal notes are incorrect.
  - Dental coverage, programs and services will be targeted in some states due to financial pressures under COVID. Look for ways to support legislatures to build up a relationship. Prepare for advocacy in a distanced world – we need to start preparing for that now. Also, build up relationships with constituents.
  - Build relationships with staff for policymakers. Make the case to them as you would to the legislator. Reach out to new people who come in right after elections. Constant education is helpful as new people come into the legislature. Reach out to diverse groups - throw a wide net. Connect with private practice owners.
  - How to reach legislators now? Identify champions. Generate ‘sign on’ letters or other advocacy efforts. See who joins. Get people interested and energized about it. Foster and nurture that interest. Aim for finding 1 or 2 champions and 4-5 people who will support your advocacy efforts.
  - Arcora is working on modeling equity and diversity in their organization before looking for equity from grantees. Board members and leadership need to be able to self-identify. They are accomplishing this through staff trainings and diversity on their board. Created an inclusion committee on their board. A shared definition of equity coming from the board. Working to self-identify and then move to seeing organizations that are led by people of color and have boards with people of color. Building towards that.
  - Create opportunities to work together and elevate issues that impact communities of color.
  - Recognize the power of story. Stories can show the strong impact behind data. Make sure we are sharing stories with an authentically collaborative spirit. Lifting those voices up instead of using those voices. Inviting people in to see the patients can have a large impact. Making connections to community can break down barriers.
  - Be a resource for state legislators to promote an oral health agenda across states.
  - Plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize for decency, fairness, justice, and love.
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## FOHPG SEPTEMBER WEBINAR: OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD A SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

*Thursday, September 17, 1 pm PST/2 pm MST/3 pm CST/4 pm EST*

Join us on **September 17** for a member discussion and presentation by **Mike Monopoli**, Executive Director of Grants Strategy at DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement and **Dr. Robert Weyant**, Associate Dean of Dental Public Health and Community Outreach, and Professor and Chair Department of Dental Public Health University of Pittsburgh!

[Click here to register today!](#)

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## INTERESTING READS

- [Equity in the Center - Awake Woke Work](#) - an excellent DEI internal review/reflection resource
- [How to Tell Compelling Stories While Avoiding Savior Complex and Exploitation](#)
- [FrameWorks Institute](#)
- [The National Conference of State Legislatures](#)



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