CALIFORNIA ORAL HEALTH PROGRESS AND EQUITY NETWORK (CA-OPEN)

A CONNECTION GUIDE FOR NETWORK PARTNERS

WELCOME TO THE CALIFORNIA ORAL HEALTH PROGRESS AND EQUITY NETWORK (CA-OPEN)!

We are excited that you are considering joining us. Your organization is indispensable to the health equity movement in our state and your unique contribution will make our network stronger, more effective and more diverse.

The truth is that we all must work together if we are to shape a world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy. That's why we created CA-OPEN, a powerful network of visionary agents of change—policymakers, providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers—who have joined forces to collaborate, share ideas, support each other, and build resources we need to boldly advance oral health equity.

As a growing and thriving network, our success depends on the strength of our relationships and the contributions of our network members—you. We've adapted this guide from our national OPEN partners to show you what's possible, what we could do together, and to encourage you to become an active member of our network.

Within this connection guide, you will find an overview of CA-OPEN's:

- Vision, mission, values, and commitment to advancing social justice and equity.
- Goals, targets, and resources to promote alignment and action.
- Member types and engagement levels.
- Efforts to track, report, and communicate our impact and growth.

We look forward to hearing from you and to championing oral health equity with you.

Onward!

Statewide Connection Team
CA-OPEN

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

Have you heard of a "wicked problem"? It's a problem that is "impossible or difficult to solve" in part because it's inextricably interconnected with other problems. In order to address a wicked problem, all concomitant problems must be addressed as well.

To create a world that gives all of us an equal opportunity to be healthy, we need to shape the systems that create, perpetuate and maintain wicked problems in health. Systems thinking offers us a lens through which to understand and analyze wicked problems, so that we may find pathways to effective action. But we must work on all the systems all at once, which means that we have to work together—as a community.

One way to think of oral health as a wicked problem is by seeing good oral health as requiring us to walk through a series of locked doors. Each door needs a key to unlock it. Some of us have keys to unlock some of the doors, and some of us can unlock other doors. Together, we may have all the keys and could successfully unlock all the doors.

Over the last decade, the [Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)](#) has emerged from a nationwide conversation that included policymakers, providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers all acknowledging that the system of healthcare we have in place today is not working for people's overall health and wellbeing, and that it was time to work together to build a new future. OPEN enables diverse agents of change to come together to advance our shared oral health goals.

We all join this network knowing that 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, nor those within it, create with intention. As such, systems change requires multiple stakeholders with diverse perspectives to get together to develop the appropriate strategies. OPEN 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, and achieving articulated goals and targets.

In summary, to ensure that everyone has access to all the keys needed for good oral health, we need to work together. And that is the purpose of our network. By coordinating and sharing information, we can more effectively tackle the interconnected problems without each of us having to become an expert in every issue area.

Networks Hold Keys to Solutions for Wicked Problems

Systems thinking offers us a holistic approach to solving wicked problems, which are a collection of problems that are inextricably interconnected. Systems thinking invites us to work collaboratively and to push on all the interconnected problems all at once.

Systems are composed of three primary components: (1) *elements* within the system (in our case, the patients, providers, clinics, etc.); (2) *relationships* between the elements (in our case, the scope of practice, provider reimbursement rates, medical-dental collaboration, etc.); and (3) *purpose* that is created through the interaction of different elements within different relationships. Using a systems approach requires that we work at all three levels of the system to support the change we hope to see.

Networks are inherently powerful because they enable us to work on all three levels of the system. Networks are collections of individuals and organizations that are united through relationships and common purpose, and are operating as a collective, rather than as a group of individual actors. Thus, while wicked problems are really aggregated sets of many problems, networks produce aggregated sets of solutions through the function of and interaction among its members. In sum:

HOW TO CREATE SYSTEMS CHANGE

- Redefine purpose
- Change relationships
- Resource the elements

HOW THE NETWORK APPROACH WORKS

- Power of the collective
- Rapid deployment of innovation
- Knowledge and resource sharing
- Highly effective if the members take ownership and accept responsibility

TYPES OF NETWORKS

There are different types of networks in the social justice ecosystem. Below are the three most common types. Organizations can join a network in order to network weave, align, or take specific action. CA-OPEN aims to do all three of those things.

TYPE	CONNECTIVITY	ALIGNMENT	ACTION/PRODUCTION
FUNCTION	Connects people to allow easy flow of and access to information and transactions.	Aligns people to develop and spread an identity and collective value proposition.	Fosters joint action for specialized outcomes (goods, services, advocacy) by aligned people and organizations.
PURPOSE	**Network Weaving** Helping people to meet each other and increase information sharing.	**Facilitating** Helping people explore potential shared identity and value proposition.	**Coordinating** Helping people plan and implement collaborative actions.
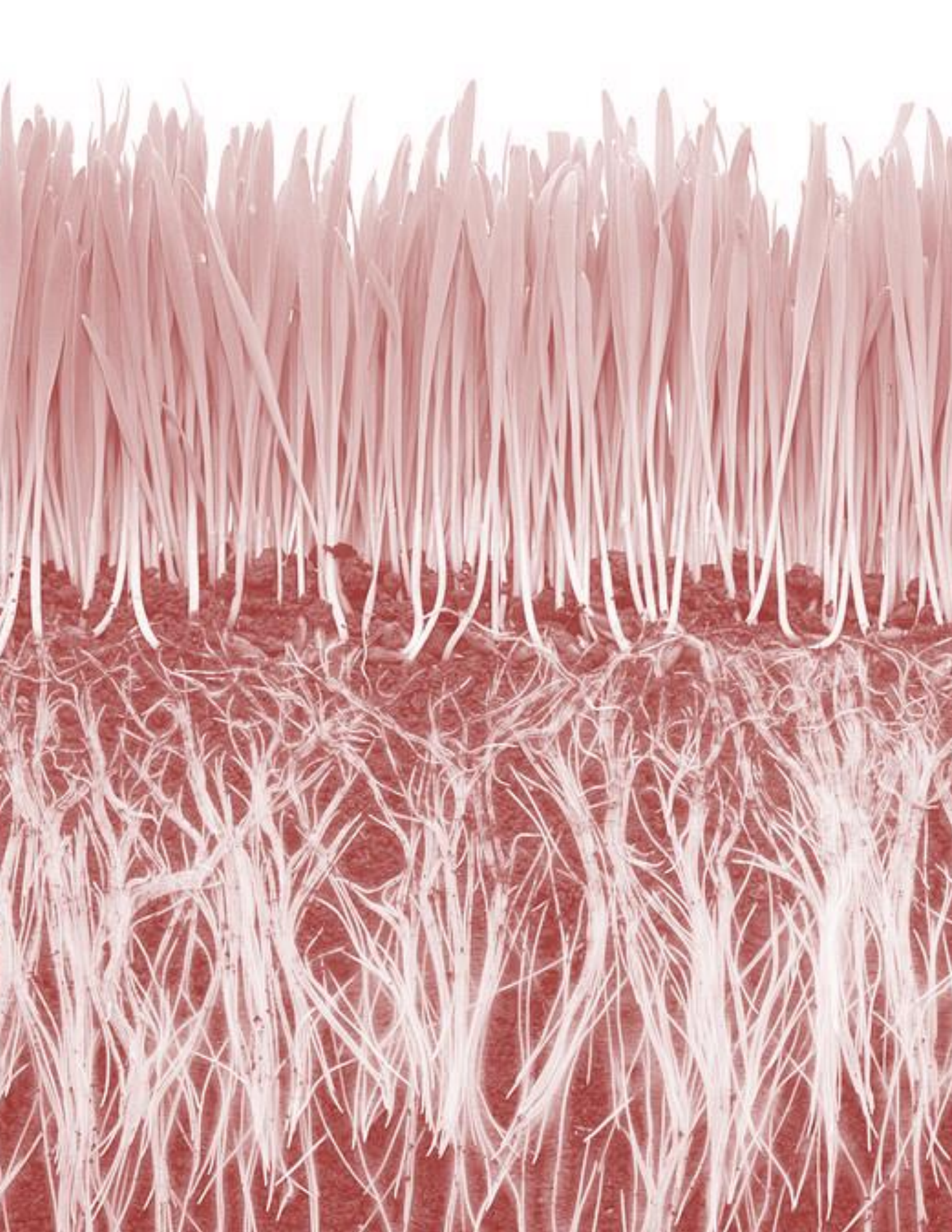
THE MODEL FOR CA-OPEN: OPEN-NATIONAL

CA-OPEN is modeled on the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN), a national network of organizations, individuals, coalitions, and others that support oral health equity. OPEN is supported and managed by a network infrastructure, which includes members from all levels, regions, and targets of the network. It is responsible for seeking out new members and cultivating the existing network. It accomplishes its mandate 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.

OPEN operates with an awareness of the complex relationships between its members. It works to foster opportunities to grow and deepen the connections and enhance the coordination of efforts across every level: grassroots, grassmiddles, and grasstops.

GRASSTOPS: Members who have national connections and potential impact.

GRASSMIDDLES: Members who are typically engaged in state-level work.

GRASSROOTS: On-the-ground members who work at the community level.

OPEN members stay connected individually and virtually through a system of continuous communication that includes the use of a collaborative platform (Socious, which is found at www.oralhealth.network), in-person and virtual convenings at the local, state, regional, and national levels, and other frequent interactions to build and strengthen authentic relationships. The members drive all network activities, a bold strategy that empowers individual network members to create large-scale change.

In addition to joining CA-OPEN, you can join OPEN at www.oralhealth.network.

OVERVIEW OF CA-OPEN: BENEFITS, ROLES, FUNCTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND WAYS TO ENGAGE

There is a role for everyone in our Network—from sharing information and coordinating an event to running a program and participating in advocacy opportunities. The Network is open to all who are interested in connecting around, aligning efforts related to, and advancing oral health equity. General members include anyone who is on our listserv, participates in a meeting (virtually or in person), and/or participates in oral health equity activities in other ways, such as through advocacy and education.

Purpose

- To influence oral health policy so that it is more equity centered.
- To coordinate our efforts so that we can move the needle on all systems impacting oral health, including policy systems, financing systems, care systems, and community systems.
- To elevate voices through shared advocacy opportunities.
- To expand community awareness and engagement in oral health advocacy through training and capacity-building opportunities.
- To align messages about the importance of equity in oral health and its impact on overall health.

Core Values

- **Equity**: We understand that systems have been designed to promote or contribute to inequities in care, quality, and access and we seek to address those inequities.
- **Inclusion**: We are open to all who share our values and seek to improve oral health equity and outcomes for all Californians.
- **Accountability**: We will hold each other accountable as we seek to hold the systems accountable.
- **Visionary**: We encourage innovation, creativity and leadership for change.
- **Collective Action**: We work together to leverage strengths and resources to collectively improve oral health outcomes and equity.

Member Benefits

- Receive the latest information on events, policy updates, and advocacy opportunities via the CA-OPEN electronic newsletter.

- Learn from peers and allies through webinars. You can submit your own ideas for webinars and lead conversations, or dial-in for a webinar led by others.
- Work with peers to organize regional convenings. You can connect to others interested in meeting and get technical assistance in coordinating events.
- Receive technical assistance related to community engagement and advocacy.
- Share your ideas and thoughts about how CA-OPEN can help you advance your unique goals, policies, and engagement opportunities.
- Get help in raising awareness for your organization's goals, policies, and actions.

How is CA-OPEN organized?

Within CA-OPEN, there are formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders are those who typically hold a position within a team. These leaders are nominated or identified by other formal leaders. Informal leaders are those who identify opportunities to create alignment or connections through events, information sharing, or by serving as a connector—by connecting individuals or groups together.

CA-OPEN is supported by a backbone facilitator organization, the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN), which provides guidance, staffing, and basic resources to support CA-OPEN's activities.

CA-OPEN is currently structured in five teams. We hope that you will consider becoming a member of a team that best fits your expertise.

On the following pages, you can learn about each team, the Chair and the members' responsibilities, as well as CPEHN's responsibilities as the backbone facilitator.

If you're interested in joining one of the Response Teams, please fill out this survey.

CA-OPEN TEAMS

- Statewide Connection Team
- Response Teams
  - Governance Response Team
  - Communications & Engagement Response Team
  - Policy Response Team
- Backbone Facilitator Organization (CPEHN)

CA-OPEN Statewide Connection Team

The Statewide Connection Team works with CPEHN (backbone facilitator organization) to support the infrastructure of the Network. It creates Network's annual goals and work plans, staffs the Response Teams, and identifies ways the Network can best support oral health equity in California. It provides strategic direction and technical support to the Response Teams, which carry out the work plans.

FUNCTIONS OF THE STATEWIDE CONNECTION TEAM
- Develop Network's annual goals, activities and work plans.
- Build and maintain infrastructure to meet the annual goals.
- Serve as liaisons to other oral health- and equity-related groups and coalitions, e.g., food, water, and transportation sectors, which impact oral health inequities.
- Determine scope and direction of the Response Teams.
- Identify learning opportunities, new theories or practices of change, new tools and resources as well as upcoming trends and share with the Network; develop recommendations for future work plans and activities.
- Identify relevant advocacy campaigns, strategies, and opportunities and share with the entire Network.

CHAIR(S) RESPONSIBILITIES
- Plan the Governance Response Team's meeting agendas.
- Facilitate the Governance Response Team's meetings (or secure facilitation).
- Identify next steps after meetings.
- Share key learnings and next steps with the entire Network.
- Coordinate volunteers who agreed to action steps.
- Work with CPEHN (backbone facilitator organization) to schedule meetings and send out materials before each meeting.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
- Take policy requests from members; reply or forward requests to the Network.
- Identify ways to share information with the entire Network.
- Provide ideas for strategies and tactics, share opportunities, and discuss options.
- Vote on Network's activities and priorities.
- Share policy updates and action alerts with the entire Network.
- Provide updates and explanations to the Network's general members (members who are not part of one of the Response Teams).

BACKBONE FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES (CPEHN)
- Schedule Statewide Connection Team meetings using Doodle.
- Plan each meeting's agenda in collaboration with the Chair.
- Facilitate meetings and identify next steps in collaboration with the Chair.
- Take meeting notes and share with the members after the meeting.
- Identify next steps after meetings and follow up with Network members.

Response Teams

Response Teams carry out activities and special projects related to the Network's goals, and they draft recommendations for the Statewide Connection Team members to review and approve. Each Response Team is staffed by the backbone facilitator organization (CPEHN) and one Statewide Connection Team member. The goal is to ensure that each team has continuity, guidance, and adequate resources.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL THE RESPONSE TEAMS
- Make decisions through an inclusive process of feedback and discussion.
- Present recommendations to the Statewide Connection Team about how to move the work forward and how to share information with the entire Network.
- Share progress, recommendations, decisions and learnings with other Response Teams and the Statewide Connection Team.

Governance Response Team

The Governance Response Team is tasked with creating a framework for the Network; to ensure members' needs are heard and addressed; to create a sustainable, inclusive Network structure; to plan Statewide Connection Team meetings; and to draft Governance Response Team's activities and recommendations for decision-making at the Statewide Connection Team meeting.

KEY FUNCTIONS
- Develop and share guidelines for the Statewide Connection Team and develop the team members' roles and responsibilities.
- Develop recommendations for the Statewide Connection Team's consideration regarding decision-making functions, responsibilities, leadership structure, and needs for the Network.
- Identify sustainability goals and practices for the Network.
- Assess governance structure and recommend changes to ensure efficacy.
- Plan Statewide Connection Team meetings.
- Review the Governance Response Team's next steps, actions and recommendations for decision-making purposes.

CHAIR(S) RESPONSIBILITIES
- Plan the Governance Response Team's meeting agendas.
- Facilitate the meetings (or secure facilitation).
- Identify next steps after meetings.
- Share key learnings and next steps with the entire Network.
- Coordinate volunteers who agreed to action steps.
- Work with CPEHN to schedule and send out materials before meetings.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
- Participate in quarterly planning meetings.
- Review all information shared prior to the meeting and come prepared to discuss, debate, and provide guidance.
- Serve on at least one other Team or agree to review meeting notes.
- Meet before Statewide Connection Team meetings to help plan those meetings.

BACKBONE FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES (CPEHN)
- Schedule Response Team's meetings using Doodle.
- Plan each meeting's agenda in collaboration with the Chair.
- Facilitate meetings and identify next steps in collaboration with the Chair.
- Take meeting notes and share with the members after the meeting.
- Identify next steps after meetings and follow up with Network members.

Communications & Engagement Response Team

The Communications and Engagement Response Team is tasked with identifying a strategy to engage the existing and the new individuals and organizations that join the Network. This Response Team also develops and disseminates messages, information, and activities throughout the Network (not including the policy-related messages and activities). This Response Team also works with CPEHN's staff on monthly newsletters and website development and maintenance.

KEY FUNCTIONS
- Identify messages, information and activities to engage new and current Network members, including webinars and non-policy related materials.
- Develop an onboarding process, update the member guide, and assist with identifying formal and informal leaders to serve as connectors in the Network.
- Identify regions or communities whose membership can be increased.
- Guide the promotion and dissemination of Network's resources and materials.

CHAIR(S) RESPONSIBILITIES
- Develop the Communications & Engagement Response Team's meeting agendas.
- Facilitate the meetings (or secure facilitation).
- Identify action steps and disseminate them after the meetings.
- Share Team's key learnings and next steps with the entire Network.
- Coordinate volunteers who agreed to action steps.
- Work with CPEHN to schedule and send out materials before meetings.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
- Participate in quarterly planning meetings.
- Review membership lists to identify who is and who isn't part of the Network.

- Identify potential targets for Network membership.
- Volunteer to assist with onboarding and developing new member guides.
- Develop tools for members including trainings, newsletters, and webinars.

BACKBONE FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES (CPEHN)
- Schedule the Communications & Engagement Response Team's meetings using Doodle.
- Plan each meeting's agenda in collaboration with the Chair.
- Facilitate meetings and identify next steps in collaboration with the Chair.
- Take meeting notes and share with the members after the meeting.
- Identify next steps after meetings and follow up with Network members.

Policy Response Team

The Policy Response Team is tasked with creating a space for the Network to engage in dialogue about potential policy opportunities. The Policy Response Team will update the Network on key policy issues, assess current strategies and support members through analysis and recommendations for future policy priorities.

KEY FUNCTIONS
- Review and assess the current state and local oral health policies.
- Develop a policy roadmap for the Network; seek input and feedback from the entire Network.
- Identify, promote, and support strategies for all members to engage in advocacy.
- Create and facilitate strategies to ensure members are connected to policy opportunities locally and statewide, e.g., by developing webinars or policy alerts.

CHAIR(S) RESPONSIBILITIES
- Develop the Policy Response Team's meeting agendas.
- Facilitate the meetings (or secure facilitation).
- Identify action steps and disseminate them after the meetings.
- Share Team's key learnings and next steps with the entire Network.
- Coordinate volunteers who agreed to action steps.
- Work with CPEHN to schedule and send out materials before meetings.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES
- Participate in quarterly planning meetings.
- Take policy requests from members; reply or forward them to the Network.
- Identify ways to share information with the entire Network.
- Provide ideas for strategies and tactics, share opportunities, and discuss options.
- Vote on Network's activities and priorities.
- Share policy updates and action alerts with the entire Network.
- Provide updates and explanations to members outside of the Response Team.

BACKBONE FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES (CPEHN)

- Schedule Policy Response Team's meetings using Doodle.
- Plan each meeting's agenda in collaboration with the Chair.
- Facilitate meetings and identify next steps in collaboration with the Chair.
- Take meeting notes and share with the members after the meeting.
- Identify next steps after meetings and follow up with Network members.

Backbone Facilitator Organization (CPEHN)

The role of a backbone facilitator organization is to provide direction and support to its members through the Network infrastructure. In our case, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN) coordinates the Statewide Connection Team and staffs the Response Teams. CPEHN also provides resources for early Network activities including research, technical assistance for events and activities, staffing for meetings, and serves as a connector to the Network.

KEY FUNCTIONS

- Provides support for the Network, in particular by staffing the Statewide Connection Team and the Response Teams.
- Discerns Network's needs and provides technical assistance and resources.
- Identifies potential resources for achieving Network's goals.

CALIFORNIA ORAL HEALTH PROGRESS AND EQUITY NETWORK (CA-OPEN) POLICY PLATFORM

The following goals and recommendations have been compiled from various sources of information including (1) discussions with a broad cross-section of stakeholders at the regional Network convening in 2018, (2) assessments from various diverse communities across the state, (3) the State Dental Director's Oral Health Plan, (4) findings from a survey of Network members, and (5) information taken from engagements in various county local oral health assessment advisory committees. Below is an overview of key overarching policy goals and potential recommendations.

Problem Statement

Our oral health is shaped by our surroundings and opportunities. Some people are able to easily obtain good oral health care. But many others cannot afford or are unable to access the resources and services they need. Further, disparities in oral health care can lead to fewer opportunities in education, employment, and well-being. Oral health directly affects our overall health, self-esteem, and quality of life. The following policy goals and recommendations are supported by the California Oral Health Network.

Goal 1: Increase access to affordable, comprehensive, and culturally and linguistically appropriate health coverage and services that include oral health services.

- Support universal health coverage options to ensure all Californians have access to preventive, care management, and emergency services related to oral health care.
- Improve access to culturally and linguistically appropriate oral health services across all delivery systems, including but not limited to Medi-Cal, Denti-Cal, managed care, fee-for-service, private coverage, and health clinics.
- Expand funding for oral health system coordination, outreach and education, and navigation assistance.
- Improve affordable oral health care options across the lifespan and across health care payers including commercial coverage, public programs, institutional, rural, and disability care/elder care settings. In addition, support the addition of a dental benefit to Medicare.
- Create a culture of providing safe, welcoming, and integrated oral health, and health care for patients and their families of all backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences.

- Improve oral health literacy for all communities with particular attention to reaching vulnerable communities.
- Strengthen the oral health infrastructure, by focusing the payment systems on incentivizing positive oral health outcomes, ensuring timely access and network adequacy that includes delivering oral health services in the community.
- Create a Denti-Cal system based on an evidence-based structure that incentivizes reaching underserved groups and providing prevention and early intervention care.
- Ensure that oral health providers know how to access interpreters and are trained on how to work with them to facilitate effective communication.

Goal 2: Better integrate public health and oral health to reduce health inequities.

- Increase access to and integrate clinical and non-clinical oral health preventive services to reduce dental decay and create life-long healthy practices.
- Support access to clean fluoridated water, and ensure communities understand the benefits of fluoridated water.
- Strengthen the connection between healthy food and beverages and improved oral health, and create sustainable funding for nutrition and healthy food expansion programs.
- Support efforts that promote living wages, economic security and employment opportunities, so that vulnerable communities such as immigrants, people with limited English proficiency, and people who are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated have the resources they need to thrive.

Goal 3: Ensure a diverse, integrated workforce to meet California's health care needs.

- Create and prioritize a diverse and trained oral health workforce that is better integrated into the overall health care delivery system and nimble to thrive within this system.
- Ensure providers across the oral health field are trained in culturally and linguistically appropriate service (CLAS) standards of care and on anti-discrimination laws and practices.
- Ensure that language interpreters in oral health are tested and trained in interpreter ethics, code of conduct and oral health terminology.
- Create funding, environments, and opportunities to build interdisciplinary dental teams.
- Continue to invest in improving state funding, such as loan repayment programs, to support a more diverse dental workforce.

- Promote opportunities across health care delivery systems—through contracts and/or incentives—as well as medical, dental and public health schools, to train and educate providers about the links between oral health and overall health.
- Work across agencies, departments, and commissions focused on workforce development to prioritize oral health.
- Ensure that our current workforce members are working at the top of their licensure and expertise by allowing and incentivizing those most suited to do preventive and education work (such as dental hygienists, community health workers, educators, home visitors, etc., as appropriate) to provide those services, leaving more complex care to dentists.

Goal 4: Improve oral health systems to ensure better patient and population health.

- Remove regulatory barriers that inhibit adoption of systems that reach underserved groups and provide prevention and early intervention care.
- Incentivize the integration of oral health prevention and access across health, social services, education, disability care and elder care settings.
- Ensure consistent and thorough data collection and reporting from federal, state and local government agencies, as well as health and dental plans and providers, especially on adult dental utilization, that includes disaggregated data by subpopulations and communities.
- Fund community-based organizations to assist with culturally and linguistically appropriate oral health outreach, education, enrollment and navigator assistance.
- Support the delivery of oral health care—especially for underserved populations—in community settings, such as in schools, nursing homes, and other community settings, through the Virtual Dental Home and other models.
- Improve and expand value-based oral health care and services.
- Improve the measurement of oral health quality to ensure payment and performance is connected to improved health outcomes, patient satisfaction, and proper care.
- Create opportunities and funding for care coordination across all areas of health, including but not limited to behavioral health.
- Support the formalization of best practices and lessons learned from innovative programs such as the Dental Transformation Initiative and Prop 56 funding advocacy.

STAYING CONNECTED: CA-OPEN'S COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

We seek to keep you updated and informed of critical policy issues, advocacy opportunities, and bridge-building events.

CA-OPEN Website

The CA-OPEN's website keeps you aware of and knowledgeable about policy updates, events, and oral health resources. We will be tracking annual policy priorities at the state and the federal levels and offer opportunities for all members to weigh in.

Additionally, the website offers a central and easily accessible place for you to share your resources, data, and upcoming events. You can use our online portal to share relevant resources and upcoming events, which will be visible to all. Finally, the website allows for regular tracking of local, state and federal advocacy opportunities.

Bookmark CA-OPEN's website and visit it often: www.ca-open.org

Quick Bites – Monthly E-Newsletter

The CA-OPEN's monthly e-newsletter, Quick Bites, provides bite-sized bits of information to keep you informed, knowledgeable and nourished on the latest oral health topics, resources, and events. Once a month, you'll receive timely and relevant updates related to oral equity policy, advocacy, news, academic research and events.

In addition to learning and deep awareness, the newsletter is an opportunity to take urgent action. Plus, you can submit your own news, actions and updates to share with the Network.

If you have news items to share, email us at caopenoralhealth@gmail.com.

OPEN Oral Health CALIFORNIA

**California Oral Health Progress
And Equity Network (CA-OPEN)
www.ca-open.org
caopenoralhealth@gmail.com
Network Facilitator: CPEHN
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network**