

AAPHD Diversity Policy

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The American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD) provides a focus for meeting the challenge to improve oral health. Recent improvements in oral health have eluded many of the most vulnerable people in the United States and other countries. With the goal of improving health for all citizens through the development and support of effective programs of oral health promotion and disease prevention, including improved access to early diagnosis and treatment, the AAPHD recognizes the value of diversity in the management of oral health problems.

Diversity is a tool to improve public health practice because it has an effect on key issues in our field, including: dental public health advocacy, education of the public, oral health promotion, and professional communication. Diversity descriptors for populations include variables such as ethnography (nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, culture), demography (age, sex, place of residence, community), status (social, economic, educational, functional), and affiliation (formal groups as well as informal groups).

Therefore, the AAPHD is committed to strengthening and expanding

our public health mission in the area of diversity by

1. increasing the focus on dental public health advocacy, and health promotion, particularly supporting initiatives that are culturally competent (i.e., those that adopt approaches that stimulate active involvement of the people to be reached by oral health programs) and that are designed using validated community-based approaches. Examples of these include:

- a. providing advocacy for funding resources to be allocated to outreach and health promotion programs for difficult-to-reach populations (i.e., research and demonstration projects that determine the cost, effectiveness, and feasibility of onsite preventive strategies for underserved groups);

- b. providing advocacy for expanded outreach programs that include primary prevention and/or treatment within dental and dental hygiene schools and state or government programs;

- c. providing expertise, networking resources, and advocacy to programs that are designed to educate populations;

2. having a stronger impact within dental and dental hygiene schools, to recruit into dentistry and into the spe-

cialty, individuals from diverse populations; and assuring the preparation of a dental workforce that is able to adapt and treat underserved populations (Medicaid recipients and uninsured) via

- a. promoting the implementation of stronger DPH curriculums (i.e., increasing the focus on health promotion within undergraduate curriculums emphasizing: community participatory models/community-based approaches, cultural competency principles, advocacy, and policy making);

- b. assisting in the initiatives to recruit schoolchildren from diverse populations to become dental health care professionals;

- c. developing mentorship programs;

3. including the participation of AAPHD membership and professionals/organizations within AAPHD activities, and partnerships, who represent diverse populations;

4. actively contribute to the professional development of its membership regarding diversity, cultural competency, and community-based approaches, particularly at annual meetings and continuing education events.

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