



A UCLA-led Consortium Funded by CA DHCS  
through the California Medi-Cal 2020 Demonstration

## DENTAL TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE OVERVIEW



**Improving  
Children's Oral Health,  
One Smile at a Time.**

Innovating Health Care Delivery in  
Los Angeles County to Improve  
Oral Health Access  
for 500,000 Children with  
Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal Coverage

**UCLA**

**Dental Transformation  
Initiative**

# Dental Transformation Initiative

## Program Overview

more LA smiles

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## Because Who Doesn't Want to See More Happy, Healthy Children's Smiles?

**More LA Smiles** is a UCLA-led Dental Transformation Initiative that aims to improve oral health access for 500,000 Los Angeles County children with Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal coverage.

## Why This Is Important

Dental caries, the disease that causes tooth decay and can lead to cavities and other serious health problems, remains the **most common chronic disease affecting children** – 5 times more common than asthma.

54% of California children experience caries by kindergarten. 71% have caries experience by 3rd grade, with higher levels of caries experience and untreated caries in schools with higher numbers of children who qualify for free & reduced lunch programs. **Children in Los Angeles County face great oral health disparities and fare worse than the national average for prevalence of tooth decay.**

## The Impact

Pain, infections, missed school days and costly treatment that often requires sedation. Poor oral health can disrupt normal childhood development and seriously damage overall health

## The Good News

Childhood Dental Disease is largely preventable!

### Did you know?

Even before teeth come in, you can take care of your child's mouth by cleaning gums with a washcloth.

### Did You Know?

More than 51 million school hours are missed each year due to dental-related problems.

### Did you know?

Doctors recommend taking your child for the first dental visit within six months of the first tooth, or by the first birthday.

### Did you know?

54% of California children experience caries by the age of 5.

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Overall, children in Los Angeles County are more likely to experience dental caries than children in the United States. The most recent data available for LA County show that nearly 40% of preschool children had dental caries, compared to 28 percent of same-age children nationally. Among children aged 6–13, 44% in LA County had dental caries, compared to 27 percent, nationally.

**Children of color and poor children experience higher levels of dental disease than their white, more affluent counterparts.**

Data on dental care use by children in California show a substantial gap between children who are publicly insured (e.g., Medi-Cal/Denti-Cal) and those with commercial coverage. Recent reports – prior to the launch of the Medi-Cal Dental Transformation Initiative – found that the state had made little progress in improving access to dental care for children from low-income families. More recent reports following initiation of the state-wide Medi-Cal Dental Transformation Initiative have shown some improvements, but persistent gaps.



## What We're Doing About It

In 2007, the The Little Hoover Commission issued a report *A Smarter Way to Care* which urged transformation of California's Medi-Cal program to focus on prevention, coordinated care, cost effectiveness and health outcomes.

That report inspired the Medi-Cal 2020 Dental Transformation Initiative which includes support for Local Dental Pilot Projects including the UCLA-led More LA Smiles project, which is the largest.

**More LA Smiles** is working to develop and implement an improved system to provide oral health care for children, focused on filling the current gaps in care delivery by:

Engaging and training clinical providers to provide care for high-risk children

Using information technology to overcome gaps in the current care delivery system and better connect kids with ongoing sources of care in their communities

Partnering with community-based organizations (incl. schools and Head Start programs) to raise awareness of the importance of children's oral health and expand preventive services and referrals for underserved segments of children throughout LA County



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## How LA Schools & Head Start Programs Can Help and Benefit

As a community partner in efforts to achieve the goal of improving children's health, LA County schools and Head Start programs can receive services, support, resources, regular communications and referrals, including:

On-site oral health assessments / screenings (including the use of new IT tools to conduct screenings without the need for clinical examinations)

On-site oral health education for children, parents and participating programs' staff members (if desired)

On-site clinical preventive services (application of fluoride varnish and/or dental sealants) for children who don't have a dental home (ongoing source of dental care)

Support for referrals of children who don't have a dental home to local school-based or community-based dentists who provide a wide range of basic dental services

## How Technology Will Help

Referrals can be made through the **Los Angeles Dental Registry and Referral System (LADRRS)**, an information technology tool designed to improve medical and dental care coordination through electronic referrals. The dental registry efficiently facilitates information sharing and care management.

Data collected by the dental registry further enables effective monitoring of the oral health status of children enrolled in Medi-Cal and utilization of dental services.

Oral health services will be arranged through the use of **More LA Smiles Connections**, an online tool that connects programs serving children with oral health resources and services directly in their communities.

For More Information, Email [moreLAsmiles@ucla.edu](mailto:moreLAsmiles@ucla.edu) Or Visit [moreLAsmiles.org](https://moreLAsmiles.org)

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