



**Policy Statement on the Position of Missouri State Dental Director  
November 16, 2012**

**The Missouri Coalition for Oral Health Supports the Establishment of a  
Missouri State Dental Director**

The Missouri Coalition for Oral Health has identified the designation of the position of State Dental Director as a top policy priority. A state Dental Director (*defined by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors - ASTDD - as the person who has the authority to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a state's oral health program*) is needed to establish the clinical, fiscal and policy priorities necessary to effectively address the state's oral health and to manage state investment in the programs and services necessary to reduce the impact of oral disease, a largely preventable, yet extraordinarily common chronic infectious disease process. Through the identification and dissemination of best practices and evidence-based solutions, the Dental Director would have a substantial impact on the ability to improve Missouri's oral health status and would be able to maximize the effective use of limited resources.

A State Dental Director, reporting to the Director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, would improve the efficiency of the state's oral health infrastructure by determining priorities for the expenditure of state resources, providing leadership on all related issues, and coordinating resources across oral health programs. In addition to helping the state meet requirements for the receipt of federal grant programs, the Dental Director would enable the state to develop comprehensive initiatives for the prevention of oral diseases and improved access to oral health care.

The role of the Dental Director would be to ensure that Missouri is equipped to do the following:

1. **Monitor** oral health status to identify community health problems.
2. **Diagnose and investigate** oral health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. **Inform, educate, and empower** people about oral health and related health issues.
4. **Mobilize** community partnerships to identify and solve oral health problems.
5. **Develop policies and plans** that support individual and community health efforts.
6. **Enforce** laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.

7. **Link** people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. **Assure** a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce.
9. **Evaluate** effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based oral health services.
10. **Research** for new insights and innovative solutions to oral health problems.

While many states employ a dentist in this capacity, others have chosen to fill the position with a dental hygienist or a public health professional.

Find out more about the Missouri Coalition for Oral Health, and how you can help improve the oral health of Missouri through supporting sound public policy at [www.oralhealthmissouri.org](http://www.oralhealthmissouri.org).

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