



## 2021-2022 Policy Priorities

The Arizona Oral Health Coalition (AZOHC) is dedicated to advancing local, state, and federal policies that will improve oral health for all. Additionally, AZOHC will support regional OHCs to promote oral health through local advocacy efforts. We will take a leadership role in advancing state policies that have the potential to improve oral health status, access to oral health care, and address oral health disparities in Arizona.

To this end, AZOHC strives to promote creative policy solutions to systems-level challenges, to advocate for policies and practices that will promote oral health equity, to work towards integration of oral health services within the broader health care system, and to incorporate the perspective of payers, providers, and patients in all we do.

By critically examining data, rethinking payment structures and incentives, engaging providers, and mobilizing stakeholders toward action, we can create and sustain a culture of health in Arizona.

### 2022 State Legislative priorities:

- 1) **Provide comprehensive and restorative oral health coverage to adult AHCCCS participants.** Oral health is fundamental to overall health. Access to routine, preventive care is essential to identify and treat dental issues early. [Untreated oral disease](#) is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular issues, pregnancy and delivery complications, poor mental health and self-image, and pneumonia and other respiratory illnesses. [Research demonstrates](#) that providing oral health benefits to adult Medicaid participants reduces both emergency department visits and overall expenses. In short, this investment will yield dividends - both for population health and the state budget.
- 2) **Extend teledentistry coverage beyond the COVID-19 state of emergency and allow AHCCCS dental providers to bill for comprehensive dental exams delivered remotely.** Arizona has long been recognized as a leader in telehealth, but the pandemic has cast a spotlight on the importance of telemedicine in facilitating continuity of care. The state should reimburse providers for comprehensive dental exams delivered through telemedicine and permanently authorize teledentistry reimbursement. Doing so will help [reduce oral health disparities and improve access to dental care](#).
- 3) **Support evidence-based policy solutions that promote health equity, and lead the charge against measures that pose a risk to oral health.** AZOHC will support measures that the advocacy committee and Leadership Council agree would improve access to care and reduce health disparities. This may include, but is not limited to, legislation that would: expand access to vaccines and other preventive health care, reduce food insecurity, improve environmental quality, and strengthen Arizona's enforcement, licensing, and regulatory standards for the sale of tobacco and vaping products.