



A STATE OF DECAY, VOL. III TOOLKIT

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

OHA is grateful for your support of our efforts to address the issues facing older adults and oral health through *A State of Decay* and we encourage everyone to spread the word about this important resource. We have developed resources that you can use to advocate locally or engage in conversation about what you are doing in your state.

If you have questions, please contact Marketing Manager Brittany Wright at (312) 836-9900 or brittany.wright@oralhealthamerica.org.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT	2
ABOUT ORAL HEALTH AMERICA	2
FACT SHEET	3
STATE COMPOSITE SCORES	4
KEY MESSAGES	6
TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE	8
SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE	10

ABOUT ORAL HEALTH AMERICA

OHA is a national non-profit dedicated to changing lives by connecting communities with resources to drive access to care, increase health literacy and advocate for policies that improve overall health through better oral health for all Americans.

A State of Decay, Vol. III is the third in a series of reports from OHA surveying the state of oral health for older Americans. It is one of five strategies of OHA's Wisdom Tooth Project®, a program designed to meet the oral health challenges of a burgeoning population of older adults who are aging in the community, their family caregivers and the health professionals that are working to help them age healthily and independently.

A State of Decay, Vol. III is available today at toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay. Infographic and other materials available upon request.

IMPORTANT LINKS

Keep these web links in mind to share resources. You can connect with Oral Health America on various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

- For information about Oral Health America, please visit oralhealthamerica.org
- *A State of Decay*, Vol. III is available at toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay.
- Download the infographic that summarizes the issues at toothwisdom.org/page/-/2016_ASOD_Infographic_web.jpg

FACT SHEET

A fact sheet assist members of the media and within your organization/agency to get an overview of the report. Please use the fact sheet, key messages and state composite scores to discuss your work locally.

Oral Health is an important part of overall health and well-being, but what defines oral health, the consequences of ignoring it, and what can be done to improve it at the community level is poorly understood. There are huge gaps in oral health which appear along racial, economic, geographic, and social lines, and in particular for older Americans, and we can make a real difference by opening up a much broader conversation about the complex issues surrounding the oral health of older Americans as well as the goals and responsibilities of communities in providing support and access.

Good oral health is a right and should be available to all older Americans, not be seen as a privilege for only a few.

A State of Decay, Vol. III by Oral Health America (OHA) is a state-by-state report of the oral health of the Americans aged 65+. As the title of the report indicates, 73 percent of states earned a Composite Score of 50 percent or less out of 100, revealing that we have a tremendous opportunity to improve oral health and access to oral healthcare benefits for all older Americans

The report is available today at toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay.

We now know more about the steps we can take to improve oral health outcomes for older Americans

OHA has created six key recommendations that would allow older Americans to continue aging healthily and independently:

- Support the implementation of the oral health screenings provision passed as part of the Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2016
- Support caregivers, often responsible for ensuring the older of health of older adults, through the passage of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act in the House of Representatives
- Advocate for financially viable publicly-funded dental benefits through Medicaid and Medicare
- Sustain Community Water Fluoridation as an evidence-based public health practice that positively impacts oral health at the population level
- Include specific language to ensure inclusion of provisions for older adults in every state's Oral Health Plan
- Establish continuous surveillance of older adults' oral health by requiring states to administer the Basic Screening Survey

STATE COMPOSITE SCORES

Figure 1 graphs and ranks the states from highest to lowest according to their Composite Score

Table 1 lists the 50 states alphabetically with the five variables

Figure 1 State Composite Score

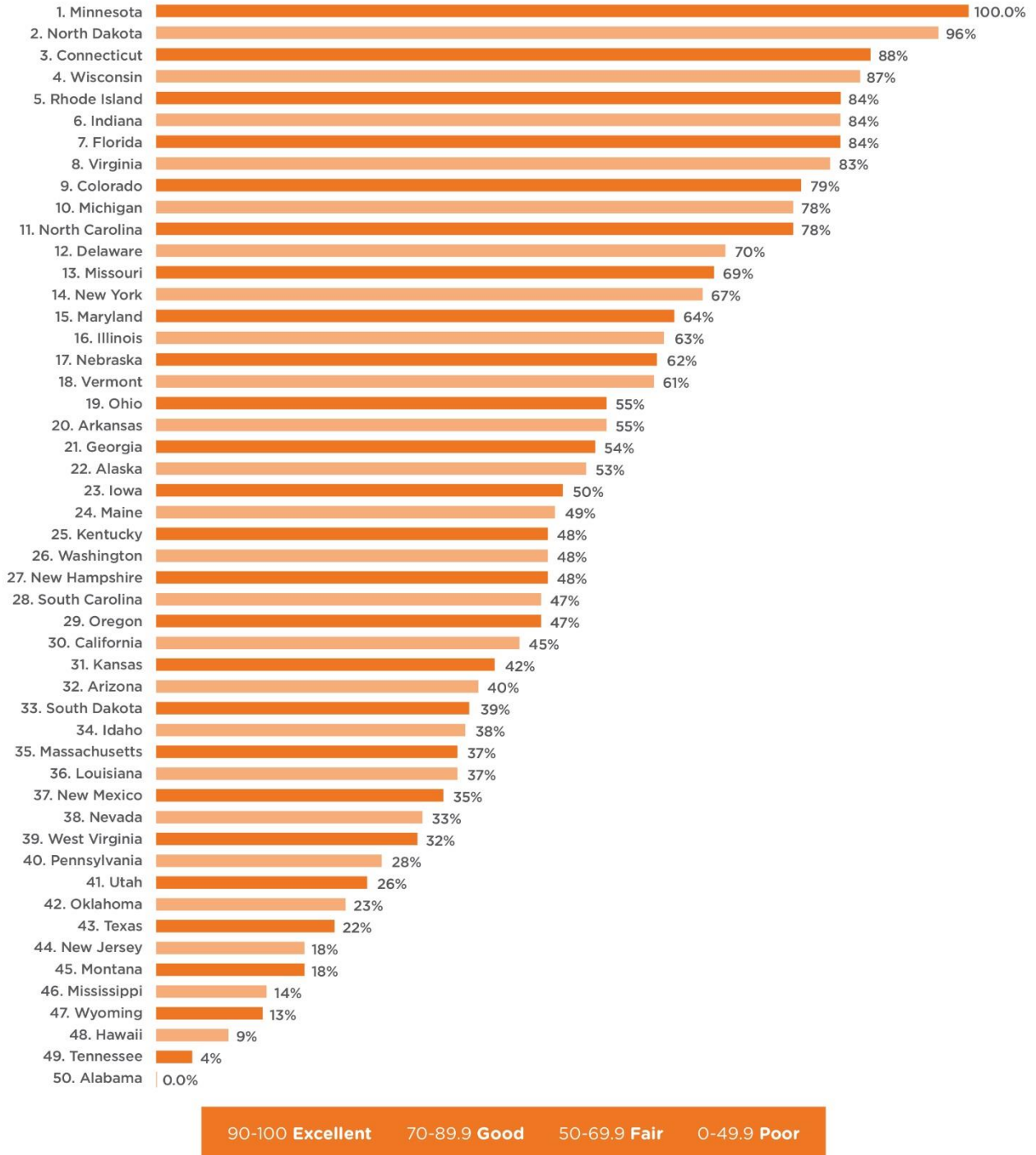


Table 1

State	CWF %	Edentulism %	SOHP	BSS	Medicaid %	State	CWF %	Edentulism %	SOHP	BSS	Medicaid %
Alabama	78.4	22.2	1.0	1.0	0.0	Nebraska	71.2	14.1	3.0	1.0	100.0
Alaska	52.9	13.4	3.0	1.0	92.3	Nevada	73.5	17.0	1.0	2.0	53.8
Arizona	57.8	12.3	3.0	2.0	0.0	New Hampshire	46.0	12.1	3.0	3.0	15.4
Arkansas	66.9	22.0	3.0	3.0	84.6	New Jersey	14.6	13.1	1.0	1.0	92.3
California	63.7	8.7	1.0	1.0	76.9	New Mexico	77.0	15.7	1.0	1.0	76.9
Colorado	72.4	10.4	4.0	1.0	100.0	New York	71.8	14.9	4.0	1.0	92.3
Connecticut	90.3	10.5	3.0	3.0	76.9	North Carolina	87.5	19.6	3.0	4.0	84.6
Delaware	86.3	16.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	North Dakota	96.7	14.3	4.0	3.0	92.3
Florida	78.0	13.2	4.0	4.0	38.5	Ohio	92.2	18.1	3.0	1.0	76.9
Georgia	96.3	19.3	3.0	3.0	15.4	Oklahoma	70.1	22.5	3.0	1.0	30.8
Hawaii	10.8	6.5	1.0	1.0	15.4	Oregon	22.6	13.0	3.0	2.0	84.6
Idaho	36.1	14.9	3.0	1.0	76.9	Pennsylvania	54.6	15.7	1.0	1.0	84.6
Illinois	98.5	16.5	2.0	3.0	53.8	Rhode Island	83.9	13.8	3.0	4.0	69.2
Indiana	94.8	18.0	3.0	4.0	84.6	South Carolina	93.8	18.1	3.0	1.0	46.2
Iowa	92.0	15.0	1.0	1.0	100.0	South Dakota	93.6	16.1	3.0	1.0	0.0
Kansas	63.6	16.4	3.0	3.0	0.0	Tennessee	89.7	22.4	1.0	1.0	0.0
Kentucky	99.9	23.9	3.0	2.0	53.8	Texas	79.6	12.3	1.0	1.0	0.0
Louisiana	43.4	20.5	3.0	4.0	15.4	Utah	51.7	11.2	2.0	1.0	15.4
Maine	79.4	17.5	3.0	1.0	69.2	Vermont	56.1	16.9	3.0	3.0	84.6
Maryland	97.2	12.9	3.0	3.0	0.0	Virginia	96.0	15.1	4.0	4.0	23.1
Massachusetts	70.4	14.4	1.0	2.0	53.8	Washington	63.6	11.1	1.0	2.0	76.9
Michigan	90.2	12.9	3.0	3.0	61.5	West Virginia	91.1	33.6	4.0	3.0	23.1
Minnesota	98.8	10.5	3.0	4.0	76.9	Wisconsin	89.4	13.5	2.0	4.0	100.0
Mississippi	58.2	22.5	3.0	1.0	15.4	Wyoming	43.6	17.2	1.0	1.0	61.5
Missouri	76.4	19.9	4.0	3.0	69.2	State Average	71.9	16.0	2.5	2.1	54.2
Montana	32.0	16.7	1.0	1.0	92.3	State Standard Deviation	23.0	4.6	1.1	1.2	35.3

KEY MESSAGES

A fact sheet assist members of the media and within your organization/agency to get an overview of the report. Please use the fact sheet, key messages and state composite scores to discuss your work locally.

Set Up:

- Oral Health America has published the third edition of *A State of Decay* report, a state-by-state analysis of oral healthcare delivery and public health factors impacting the oral health of older adults
- By examining the complexities of issues surrounding the oral health of older Americans, it provides a resource for states to address shortfalls in oral health status, dental benefits for low income adults and population-based prevention
- Additionally, this report has been designed to equip advocates to develop plans and enact policies that provide support at the population level

Problem:

- Because there are many factors which contribute to maintaining good oral health, older adults should not have to face alone. This is a multifaceted challenge and one which can be supported by many members of the community
- These challenges can be greatly ameliorated by proving greater access to dental insurance and affordable oral health services; increased fluoridation of the water supply; and promoting policies and programs that support oral health prevention and education

Solution:

- Because we understand the significant barriers that they face and the factors that may contribute their being vulnerable, it is imperative that steps are taken to elevate the role of older adults and their caregivers to realize improved oral health while striving to develop plans and enact policies that provide support at the population level
- Oral Health America has created six key recommendations that would help older Americans to continue aging healthily and independently:
- Support the implementation of the oral health screenings provision in the Older Americans Reauthorization Act of 2016
- Support caregivers through working toward the passage of the RAISE Family Caregivers Act in the House of Representatives
- Advocate for financially viable publicly-funded dental benefits
- Sustain Community Water Fluoridation as an evidence-based public health practice that positively impacts oral health at the population level
- Include specific language to ensure inclusion of provisions for older adults in State Oral Health Plans
- Establish continuous surveillance of older adults' oral health by requiring states to conduct a Basic Screening Survey

Supporting Messaging

- The report analyzes five variables impacting the oral health of older adults
 - **Edentulism** – the percentage of persons aged 65 and older who have had all their natural teeth extracted
 - **Adult Medicaid Dental Benefit** – the extent of adult Medicaid dental benefits
 - **Community Water Fluoridation** – This is the percentage of persons who had a fluoridated public water supply
 - **Basic Screening Survey** – the completion or plan to conduct oral health surveillance of older adults
 - **State Oral Health Plans** – the existence and extent to which the State Oral Health Plan includes immediate or recent efforts to improve the oral health of older adults
- OHA ranked each of the 50 states based on their oral health status among the older adult population as measured by an overall state score, which OHA refers to within this report as the Composite Score
- There are several barriers that put older Americans at risk for adverse oral health:
 - **Income, race, ethnicity, disability and mobility.** Oral diseases disproportionately affect low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, older adults with physical and intellectual disabilities and people who are homebound or institutionalized
 - **Declining overall health.** Many older adults experience adverse oral health associated with multiple morbidities and chronic health conditions
 - **Fragmented access to oral healthcare services.** There is recognition that there is generally a concentration of dental offices in more affluent urban and suburban communities. This situation exacerbates the problem of finding a provider without traveling significant distances for the growing population of older Americans.
 - **Emergency rooms are experiencing more patients with dental emergencies.** Dental ER visits as a percent of total ER visits increased from 1.06 percent in 2000 to 1.65 percent in 2010, an increase that was statistically significant
 - **Lack of a dental insurance benefit.** Older adults with dental insurance are 2.5 times more likely to visit the dentist on a regular basis

TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

The following press release can be used to share with members of the press or within your organization.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Brittany Wright, (312) 836-9900
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ORAL HEALTH AMERICA RELEASES STATE-BY-STATE ANALYSIS OF OLDER AMERICANS' ORAL HEALTH, [STATE] RESPONDS

National Report Makes the Case for Policy Change

[CITY, Month, Date] – Oral Health is an important part of overall health and well-being, but there are huge gaps in oral health particularly for older Americans. Because by the year 2030, it is expected that more than 19% of the U.S. population—almost one out of every five Americans—is expected to be 65 years or older, we can make a real difference by opening up a much broader conversation about the complex issues surrounding the oral health of older Americans as well as the goals and responsibilities of communities in providing support and access. [Insert state statistics].

[Oral Health America \(OHA\)](#) has published a new report examining factors impacting the oral health of older Americans. *A State of Decay*, Vol. III is a state-by-state report of the oral health of its 65+ population and the success or failure of states to address those needs. It reveals that continued attention is needed to ensure that America's increasing population of seniors age healthily and independently.

[Quote from your organization]

The report serves as a resource for states such as [your state] to address shortfalls in oral health status, dental benefits for low income adults and population-based prevention, all of which impact the oral health of older adults.

It proposes concrete steps that can be taken to promote healthy aging and independence for this rapidly growing cohort of America's population.

- Because early detection is key to early intervention, we need to support the Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2016 which covers oral health screenings using health promotion funds
- Passing the RAISE Family Caregivers Act in the House of Representatives would improve education and training of caregivers on proper oral health maintenance
- One of the most critical challenges for seniors is paying for care, thus we need to advocate for financially viable publicly-funded dental benefits through Medicaid and Medicare
- Community Water Fluoridation has been shown to positively impact oral health at a population level, thus we need to sustain implementation efforts
- To ensure that oral disease is prioritized along with other chronic diseases, we must include specific language to ensure inclusion of provisions for older adults in every state's Oral Health Plan
- Finally, because information can drive policy and funding supports, we need to establish continuous surveillance of older adults' oral health by requiring states to administer the Basic Screening Survey

A State of Decay, Vol. III gives a rating of "Poor," "Fair," "Good," or "Excellent" based on state level data analyzing five variables impacting older adult oral health: Edentulism (loss of all teeth), Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits, Community Water Fluoridation, Basic Screening Surveys and State Oral Health Plans.

Two states, Minnesota and North Dakota emerged as models and are profiled for best practices in the report. Both earned a Composite Score of “Excellent” with a 100 percent and 96 percent rating respectively.

OHA ranked each of the 50 states based on the overall health status among the older adult population as measured by an overall state score referred to as a Composite Score. In order, the 10 states with the highest Composite Scores are Minnesota, North Dakota, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Indiana, Florida, Virginia, Colorado and Michigan. The states with the lowest Composite Scores are Utah, Oklahoma, Texas, New Jersey, Montana, Mississippi, Wyoming, Hawaii, and Tennessee with Alabama’s score being the least favorable. The final evaluations for all 50 states revealed that 76 percent of states earned a Composite Score of 50 percent or less out of 100 with 22 percent earning a Composite Score of “Fair” and 54 percent earning a Composite Score of “Poor.” Ten states received a Composite Score of “Good”. The top findings of this report that elicit further scrutiny and action are:

- Tooth loss remains a signal of suboptimal oral health. Eight states had strikingly high rates of edentulism, with West Virginia notably having an older adult population that is 33.6 percent edentate
- Fluoridated water presents an important opportunity for prevention. Five states (10 percent) still have 60 percent or more residents living in communities unprotected by fluoridated water. Hawaii (89.2 percent) and New Jersey (85.4 percent) have the highest rates of residents living without fluoridated water
- Improving oral health coverage would improve outcomes Sixteen percent of states (8 states) provide either no dental benefit or emergency coverage only through adult Medicaid dental benefits. Four states (eight percent) cover the maximum possible dental services in Medicaid
- We need strategic planning to address the oral health needs of older adults. Eighty-four percent (42 states) lack a State Oral Health Plan that mentions older adults, with 14 states lacking any type of State Oral Health Plan
- We need more data about the oral health condition of older adults. Forty-six percent (23 states) have never completed a Basic Screening Survey, a surveillance of the oral health conditions of seniors in community and long-term-care settings of older adults and have no plan to do so

Links to the latest volume of *A State of Decay* and earlier editions can be viewed on toothwisdom.org.

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A State of Decay, Vol. III is the third in a series of reports from OHA surveying the state of oral health for older Americans. It is one of five strategies of OHA’s Wisdom Tooth Project®, a program designed to meet the oral health challenges of a burgeoning population of community dwelling older adults, their family caregivers and the health professionals who are working to help them age healthily and independently.

[Insert state department/agency boilerplate]

About OHA’s Wisdom Tooth Project

For more than 60 years, Oral Health America has been the leading national non-profit dedicated to improving the oral health and well-being of Americans throughout the entire spectrum of life. Over the decades, the organization has evolved and adapted to the dynamic nature of our country’s demographics and specific health needs. The Wisdom Tooth Project® was born in 2010 due to the current and future implications of an aging population and the need for oral health resources which mean that we must take meaningful action now.

About Oral Health America

OHA’s mission is to change lives by connecting communities with resources to drive access to care, increase health literacy, and advocate for policies that improve overall health through better oral health for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. Through Smiles Across America®, which serves 460,000 children annually, the Wisdom Tooth Project®, which reaches tens of thousands of older adults, and the Campaign for Oral Health Equity, which prioritize oral health alongside other chronic diseases,

OHA helps Americans of all ages to have a healthy mouth and to understand the importance of oral health for overall health. For more information about Oral Health America, please visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.

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SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE

One way to promote OHA's efforts is through social media. Connecting with fans and followers engages supporters and builds buzz for initiatives. Adding a strong call to action to share updates creates even more momentum.

Facebook & LinkedIn

- Where does your state stand on oral health for older Americans? Check out @Oral Health America's new report, A State of Decay to find out toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay
- Good oral health is out of reach for older adults, Check out this infographic from See @Oral Health America with policy recommendations to address those barriers. #AStateofDecay http://www.toothwisdom.org/page/-/2016_ASOD_Infographic_web.pdf
- @Oral Health America's new report, A State of Decay demonstrates that older adults face many barriers to accessing oral health care. How does your state rank? toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay

Twitter

- Where does your state stand on oral health for older Americans? Check out @Smile4health's #AStateofDecay report to find out toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay
- @Smile4Health #AStateofDecay report reveals that older Americans are coming of age without oral healthcare. Learn more toothwisdom.org/stateofdecay
- INFOGRAPHIC: Good oral health is out of reach for older adults, See @Smile4Health recommendations. #AStateofDecay http://www.toothwisdom.org/page/-/2016_ASOD_Infographic_web.pdf
- NEW state-by-state report of the oral health of the US 65+ pop. & the success or failure of states to address those needs. #AStateofDecay

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