



# Our mission: your health

2021 Community Impact Report

 **DELTA DENTAL**<sup>®</sup>

A decorative graphic in the top right corner of the page, consisting of several triangles of various sizes and orientations. Some are solid black, some are white with black outlines, and some are white with black outlines and a black dot in the center. The triangles are scattered across the upper right quadrant of the page.

**The Delta Dental Institute is dedicated to advancing oral health for all Americans in partnership with the Delta Dental companies and dedicated partners across the country. With expertise rooted in Delta Dental’s rich history of oral health leadership, we engage in and support oral health research, community outreach, and advocacy, striving to ensure that everyone understands the importance of oral health to overall health and has access to the care they need. Visit [deltadentalinstitute.com](http://deltadentalinstitute.com) for more information.**





## Foreword from the President & Chief Executive Officer of Delta Dental Plans Association and the Executive Director of the Delta Dental Institute

At Delta Dental, our mission is your health. As the nation's largest dental insurer and a leader in oral health giving, for nearly 70 years we've worked to advance the well-being of the people we serve and the communities we call home.

While oral health has long been our focus — because we believe that everyone deserves a healthy smile — our mission extends well beyond that. We are committed to improving the overall health of our communities too, so they can be strong, vibrant, and resilient.

**That's why we're so proud to report that in 2021, Delta Dental impacted more than 21 million lives, investing \$106 million to improve the oral and overall health of communities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.**

We know that oral health is an essential part of overall health. Research shows that good oral health has a positive impact on everything from a person's heart health to their mental well-being to their ability to work or attend school. Accordingly, we commit our resources to expanding access to care and driving positive oral health outcomes in our communities, supporting everything from dental treatment to oral health education in schools.

As part of our focus on overall health, we also help communities improve access to healthy food and clean water, recover from natural disasters, and advocate for policies that enable better health. Importantly, we don't stop at improving health today; we are also committed to equipping our communities for better futures, and our investments in research and workforce development are helping to build a strong foundation for years to come. Together, these efforts address the full spectrum of our communities' overall health needs so everyone can live their healthiest lives.

We are also dedicated to ensuring our community impact programs reach the people who need them most, which is why equity is at the heart of our work. We celebrate the diversity of our communities and recently affirmed our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through our guiding principles.<sup>1</sup>

We are honored to share more about our efforts to improve Americans' oral and overall health in this report, and look forward to continuing to collaborate with our communities and partners on the journey toward better health for all.



**James W. Hutchison**  
President & CEO,  
Delta Dental Plans Association



**Vivian Vasallo**  
Executive Director,  
Delta Dental Institute



# Building healthier lives

Delta Dental is proud to support the oral and overall health of communities in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Our roadmap to building healthier lives is centered around expanding access to care, advancing health equity, building resilient communities, and innovating for a healthier tomorrow.

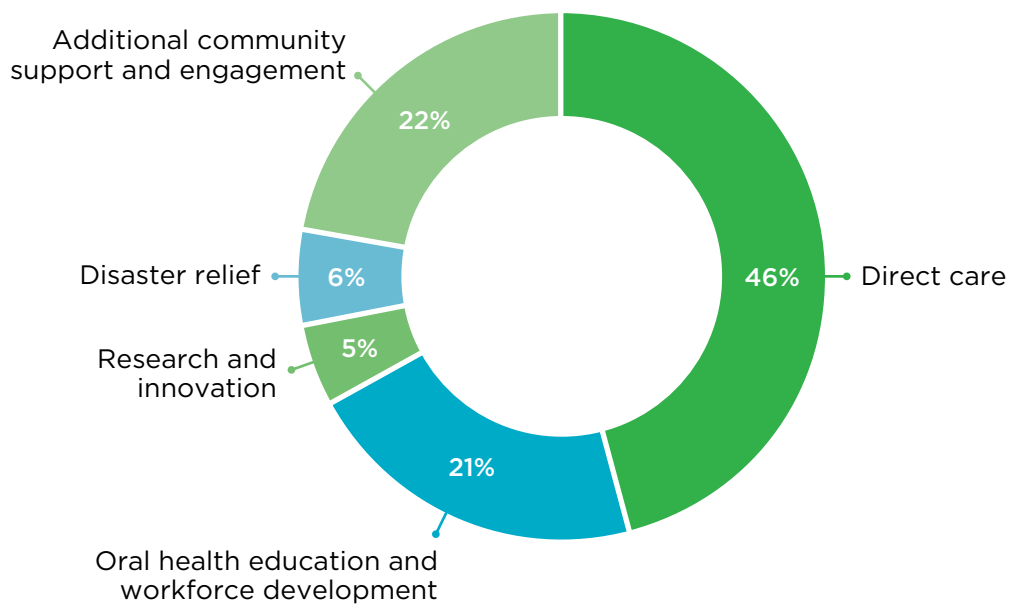






In 2021

## 2021 funding breakdown



Note: The data in this report is gathered from an annual survey conducted by Delta Dental Plans Association of all the Delta Dental companies, and covers the time period 1/1/2021 to 12/31/2021. Lives impacted was defined as individuals in attendance at an activity/event and receiving educational information or benefit from the program in the form of direct care or assistance.

# Expanding access to care

Oral health is essential to overall health, yet nearly 99 million adults across the United States lack access to dental insurance.<sup>ii</sup> To help more people in our communities gain access to care, Delta Dental supported dental treatment and prevention programs that reached 10 million people in 2021.

**Protecting children against cavities:** 20% of children in 2020 did not receive dental care.<sup>iii</sup> Our school sealant programs combatted these gaps in access by serving over 267,000 children last year, preventing cavities and positioning these children for good lifelong health.

**Supporting older adults and veterans:** Older adults and veterans often face barriers to accessing oral health care, including lack of transportation and affordability.<sup>iv</sup> We provided vital, targeted care to these communities in a variety of ways, including supporting mobile dental clinics that visit long-term care facilities and partnering with Dental Lifeline Network, which has transformed the lives of 165,600 people since 1985.<sup>v</sup>

**Scaling our impact through advocacy:** We work with our communities to build cross-sector coalitions to fight for a healthier tomorrow. Last year, we championed the inclusion of fluoride in drinking water in Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, New Hampshire, and Washington. Because of our efforts, over 4.4 million adults and children received access to fluoridated water in their communities, providing powerful protection for their teeth. In Arizona, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin, we advocated for more people to have access to dental benefits through Medicaid. We are proud of the significant impact our efforts made: for example, in Wisconsin, Medicaid rates increased by 40% thanks in part to our advocacy.

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**10 million people received dental support in 2021 from Delta Dental.**

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## Advancing health equity

In 2021, we affirmed our commitment to equity through new diversity, equity, and inclusion guiding principles, which anchor all of our community impact work.<sup>vi</sup> We recognize that due to social determinants of health, underserved populations are more likely to have poor oral health outcomes.<sup>vii</sup> These disparities are unacceptable, and we are committed to eradicating them so that every person — no matter their background or identity — has access to quality and affordable health care.

### **Building a more diverse workforce:**

Despite making up more than 30% of the U.S. population, less than 10% of dentists are Black or Hispanic.<sup>viii</sup> Research shows patients feel more trusting of health care providers who share their race or ethnicity.<sup>ix</sup>

To help ensure that the next generation of oral health care workers reflects the diversity of our communities, Delta Dental invested in workforce development, supporting the future careers of over 147,000 people, many from minority populations. We funded scholarships and grants for often underrepresented students in dental, dental assistant, and dental hygienist programs, including scholarships and funding for dental students at Howard University and Meharry Medical College, the only two HBCU dental schools in America.<sup>x</sup>

**Addressing inequities through oral health education:** Learning good oral health habits early in life, like brushing, flossing,



We supported scholarships, grants, and other workforce development efforts that benefited more than **147,000 people**, many from minority populations.

and eating healthy low sugar foods, is associated with better oral health outcomes — but young people in underserved communities are not always exposed to oral health-focused education.<sup>xi</sup> Delta Dental equipped over 10 million people across the country with the oral health knowledge they need for a healthy future. The programs we support meet people where they are, including elementary schools, children’s and science museums, health clinics, hospitals, and even their own homes via PBS.<sup>xii</sup>

**Closing gaps in our communities:** Many communities, including veterans, people with special needs, older adults, and people in rural areas, face unique challenges to achieving optimal health. Delta Dental provided these communities and others with targeted support in a variety of ways, like supporting Penn Dental Medicine’s national online professional development program designed to help oral health professionals better understand and care for those with disabilities.<sup>xiii</sup> We also supported workshops and trainings on topics such as public health and provided financial assistance to dentists with loans who practice in underserved areas.

# Building resilient communities

Our mission calls us to improve our communities' well-being to prepare them for healthier tomorrows. Because we live, work, and volunteer in our communities each day, we are uniquely positioned to equip them for the future.

**Social determinants of health:** The conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play have big impacts on their health. Access to healthy food is one example; over 10% of people in the U.S. lack access to the food they need to live active, healthy lives.<sup>xiv</sup> We addressed this need by supporting food drives and food banks, supplying 17 million meals, as well as programs that address food insecurity and initiatives to address food waste.

**Employee engagement:** We used our time and talent to support our communities, dedicating 17,000 hours to volunteering. Delta Dental employees organized blood drives and donated blood, sent greeting cards to older adults and veterans through the Red Cross, and purchased holiday gifts for foster children.

**Investing in a healthier planet:** Overall health goes beyond how we take care of ourselves. Healthy communities prioritize sustainability and the thoughtful stewardship of their environments. Delta Dental invested in water bottle-filling stations in schools to reduce the use of plastic, promoted recycling programs, and drove energy efficiency through the careful design of their physical spaces.



♡  
Delta Dental employees dedicated **17,000 hours** to volunteering.





## Innovating for a healthier tomorrow

Tomorrow's health challenges won't be solved by today's solutions alone. By funding research and supporting new care models and technologies, we focused on the future.

**Advancing medical-dental integration:** We improved oral and overall health outcomes for tens of thousands of adults and children through programs that built health clinics, educated primary care providers on oral health, and established and led oral health protocols at hospitals.

**Conducting important research:** Delta Dental supported a range of research, including projects focused on how to best educate parents on the health benefits of early childhood oral health intervention. The Delta Dental Institute is also supporting research in partnership with leading institutions the Harvard

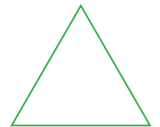
School of Dental Medicine, the University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, and the University of Iowa.<sup>xv</sup>

**Technology:** In 2021, we helped pilot new ways to use technology to improve care. For example, we supported efforts to further the use of secure video calls in dentistry, which can help serve the oral health needs of patients who live in more remote areas. Delta Dental advocated for laws establishing standards for teledentistry and created high-quality, easily accessible online teledentistry training for providers.

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We supported oral health education efforts, including programs in elementary schools and hospitals, that reached more than **10 million people**.

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## Resources

- i. "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Guiding Principles," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), no date, accessed 4/28/22.
- ii. "The State of America's Oral Health Report," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), 4/21.
- iii. Dzifa Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Lindsey I. Black, "Dental Care Utilization Among Children Aged 1-17 Years: United States, 2019 and 2020," National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief No. 424, [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 12/21.
- iv. "Disparities in Oral Health," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 2/21; "Lessons Learned: A Rural Case Study: Challenges Increasing Access to Dental Care Among Rural Veterans," [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health](#), 5/17.
- v. "Our Programs," Dental Lifeline Network, no date, accessed 5/4/22.
- vi. "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Guiding Principles," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), no date, accessed 4/28/22.
- vii. "Disparities in Oral Health," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 2/21.
- viii. Kimber Solana, "HPI publishes findings into racial disparities in oral health," [American Dental Association](#), 4/19/21.
- ix. "Study Finds Patients Prefer Doctors Who Share Their Same Race/Ethnicity," [Penn Medicine](#), 11/9/20.
- x. "What is an HBCU?," White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities, [U.S. Department of Education](#), no date, accessed 4/28/22.
- xi. Kathryn A. Atchison, Alice M. Horowitz, and Nicole D. Holland, "Improving America's oral health literacy: Leveraging lessons from health literacy to elevate America's understanding of oral health," [Delta Dental Institute](#), 2/13/20; Priya Devadas Nakre and A. G. Harikiran, "Effectiveness of oral health education programs: A systematic review," [Journal of International Society of Preventive & Community Dentistry](#), 7-12/13.
- xii. Kate Reed, "Delta Dental and Arizona PBS Partnering to Educate Children on Good Oral Health," [Raising Arizona Kids](#), 4/12/22.
- xiii. "Delta Dental Foundation Funds Professional Development Series on Serving Persons with Disabilities," [Penn Dental Medicine](#), 3/24/21.
- xiv. "Food Security Status of U.S. Households in 2020," [U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service](#), 4/22/22.
- xv. "Delta Dental Institute funds new oral health research from leading academic institutions," [Delta Dental](#), 8/26/21.





## Dive deeper

For more information and stories about Delta Dental's community impact work across the country, visit [2021cir.deltadental.com](https://2021cir.deltadental.com).

### About Delta Dental Plans Association

Based in Oak Brook, Illinois, Delta Dental Plans Association is the not-for-profit national association of the 39 independent Delta Dental companies. Through these companies, Delta Dental is the nation's largest dental insurance provider, covering more than 83 million Americans, and offering the country's largest dental network with approximately 154,000 participating dentists. Over the last decade, Delta Dental companies provided over \$1.8 billion in direct and in-kind support to improve the oral health of our communities.

### About the Delta Dental Institute

The Delta Dental Institute is dedicated to advancing oral health for all Americans in partnership with the Delta Dental companies and dedicated partners across the country. With expertise rooted in Delta Dental's rich history of oral health leadership, we engage in and support oral health research, community outreach, and advocacy, striving to ensure that everyone understands the importance of oral health to overall health and has access to the care they need. Visit [deltadentalinstitute.com](https://deltadentalinstitute.com) for more information.

