



Children's
Oral Health
Network
of Maine

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

To our partners in improving children's oral health,

As the Children's Oral Health Network of Maine is rounding out our sixth year as a network, our collective influence to build a better oral health system has certainly become apparent. This movement is gaining momentum at such a rate that we can scarcely keep up! We are so proud of the energy that our Network brings to the dual challenge of helping children get care they urgently need within our current system, while simultaneously working to build a system that would serve everyone better in the long term.

We hope that as you read this overview of the past year, it becomes abundantly clear to you, as it is to us, that we are making significant progress – primarily propelled by this Network's collective belief that we can solve this problem and make Maine a place where all children can grow up free from preventable dental disease.

With gratitude for your passion, persistence, and energy,

Becca and Kalie



2023 COHN Steering Committee

Photo from L-R, Standing Row: Sanaa Abduljabbar, Maine Access Immigrant Network; Regina Phillips, Cross Cultural Community Services; Kate Christiansen, Maine CDC; Ayla Burke, Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation; Sherry Laliberte, Maine Dental Health Out-Reach, Inc.; Dr. Kailee Williams, Waterville Community Dental Center; Beth Pearce, (formerly) Maine Primary Care Association; Dr. Albert Abena, University of New England College of Dental Medicine. Seated Row: Kalie Hess, COHN; Morgan Hynd, the Bingham Program; Dee Kerry, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Tracey Jowett, University of Maine at Augusta; Sarah Lewis, Maine Access Immigrant Network; Becca Matusovich, COHN.

Not pictured: Lyvia Gaewsky, From the First Tooth.

Maine CDC Oral Health Position Restored!

Statement from Kate Christiansen:

In my role as the new Maine CDC Oral Health Program Manager and an enthusiastic member of the COHN Steering Committee, I extend my sincere appreciation for the invaluable network of COHN partners. The commitment to addressing complex and critical oral health challenges statewide is inspiring. Our collaborative efforts are a genuine public-private partnership, driving visionary initiatives such as growing a diversified oral health workforce, expanding delivery of essential oral health services to children in schools, and exploring the necessary oral health infrastructure for ensuring equitable oral health outcomes statewide. Together, we are making meaningful strides in promoting oral well-being among Maine’s youth.



July 2023 kick-off meeting for the Cumberland County initiative to expand school-based oral health services to all schools county-wide, using the framework of the School Action Team’s Blueprint.

Photo from L-R: Michelle Mitchell, Partnerships for Health; Ayla Burke, (formerly) Mainely Teeth; Becca Matusovich, COHN; Lori Koban, University of Maine Farmington; Jenna MacDonald, Greater Portland Health; Evelyn deFrees, E. deFrees Consulting; Kathy Martin, Greater Portland Health; Sherry Laliberte, (formerly) MCD Global Health; Kate Christiansen, Maine CDC; Amber Lombardi, Mainely Teeth; Liz Blackwell-Moore, Cumberland County



COHN Equity Statement Adopted in 2023

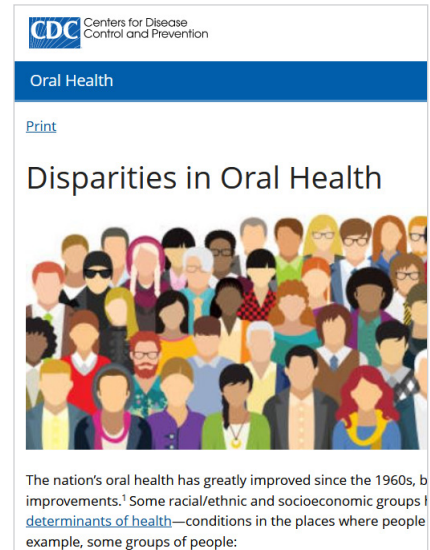
The Children's Oral Health Network of Maine is committed to addressing oral health disparities by centering equity in all aspects of our work. The lack of an equitable oral health system results in worse outcomes overall, and systemic racism and discrimination have led to particular inequities in oral health outcomes, especially for communities of color, families with low-income, and other marginalized populations.

Racial inequality persists as one of the most pervasive types of inequality, and its impacts on oral health are clear. The systems of economic injustice are inextricably intertwined with racial injustice. As such, by taking an antiracist approach to our oral health solutions COHN aims to address the other inequities that we know persist for other communities facing systemic oppression of all types.

We work to create as many pathways to oral health as possible from an early age, including bringing oral health care to where children already are and ensuring sustainable financing of the oral health system to create equal opportunities for all to access care. Within this work, we are building structures that address the extra barriers facing communities of color, families with low-income, and other marginalized populations as they seek oral health care.

COHN strives to co-create a culture of equity with partners within our Network, interprofessional health providers, and everyone who interacts with the dental system. We practice shared decision making, create feedback processes to refine the Network's efforts, and grow capacity among our Network members to build an equitable oral health system for all people in Maine. Community voices inform the design of the solutions we create so we can truly drive forward systems change that works for those who have historically been underserved.

This is a journey, and we have more work to do. COHN is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work to transform oral health systems. These values are essential to accomplishing our shared vision: a Maine where ALL children can grow up free from preventable dental disease. Unless we focus the work on those facing the greatest inequities, we will never get there. We will lean on these values, reflect, grow, and adapt as our Network continues to build an equitable oral health system.



To learn more about the types of oral health disparities that persist, check out the [CDC's webpage](#) on this topic.



Expanding Services in Schools and Community Settings

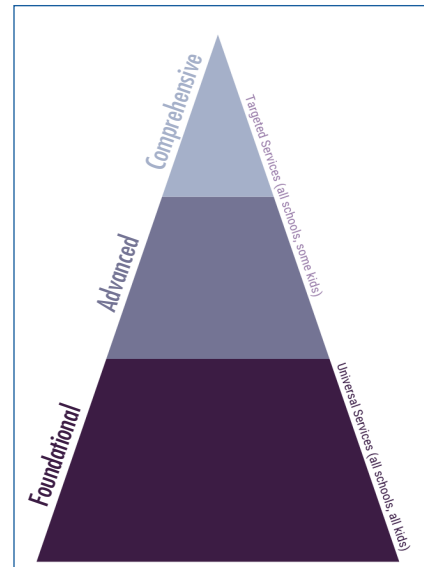
This initiative strengthens our oral health care system to reach Maine kids in schools and community settings with services. The School Action Team collaboratively developed a blueprint for statewide oral health expansion built on the image of a comprehensive “pyramid” approach. The blueprint aims to ensure foundational screening and fluoride varnish for all students, early intervention for those needing caries arrest therapies, and connections to dental homes for restorative care. Key blueprint strategies include sustainable financing; a coordinated care structure; an oral health workforce; a data management system; and age-appropriate, culturally-tailored educational tools.

2023 Highlights

- Network advocacy at the Legislature secured budget increases of nearly \$1 million new dollars annually for the expansion of Maine CDC’s School Oral Health Program.
- The School Action Team collaborated with the Maine Association of School Nurses, the [Maine Department of Education](#), and the Maine CDC to share [strategies and tools](#) for school-based oral health services, through webinars and conference workshops.
- An inventory of school oral health services currently offered in schools across the state was completed as a baseline for expansion.
- Cumberland County identified oral health as a priority in its Public Health Improvement Plan and allocated federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to a three-year county-wide school oral health project to ground test the blueprint strategies with COHN partners.

Looking ahead to 2024, the School Action Team will:

- Partner with OHIP to launch the Oral Health Navigator training program and help grow the workforce for school-based oral health services. *For more details, see [Oral Health Workforce](#) (p. 9)*
- Collaborate with the Maine CDC and MCD Global Health to support the statewide School Oral Health Program expansion.
- Continue to put the blueprint into action through the Cumberland County School Oral Health Project and create replication tools to be shared with other counties.



The COHN school blueprint outlines a coordinated approach to making comprehensive oral health services accessible for all students statewide. [Click this image for more details.](#)



Integrating Oral Health into Primary Care Settings

The Health Integration Action Team (HIAT) is a group of individuals and organizations who are committed to working together to reduce dental disease in Maine's children through medical dental integration. The HIAT guides From the First Tooth, the primary medical dental effort in Maine, as well as multiple "innovation projects" to test new models of medical dental integration throughout the state.

2023 Highlights

- HIAT partners completed the [Dental Steps for ME manual](#) and published the [Dental Steps for ME video library](#). As of December 31, the Dental Steps video library had over 2,300 page views and over 1,000 unique visitors.
- The Maine Health Access Foundation awarded funding to pilot [Dental Steps for ME](#) and to pursue field testing for the eConsult model between primary care and dentistry. With this funding, HIAT partners provided the first training for pediatric medical providers in Maine using Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) in primary care!
- CareQuest Institute awarded COHN funding to support "Fostering systems change: Addressing oral health in Maine's child welfare system."
- In its new "Bruce the Dental Health Moose" initiative, From the First Tooth developed family oral health kits to help primary care practices engage parents and caregivers in oral health education. The initiative distributed over 2,000 kits through nine primary care practices and 20+ additional practices have requested to join the pilot as funding enables expansion to more sites.



Courtney Vannah (MCD Global Health) demonstrates application of Silver Diamine Fluoride to a physician at Lincoln Medical Partners Primary Care in Damariscotta

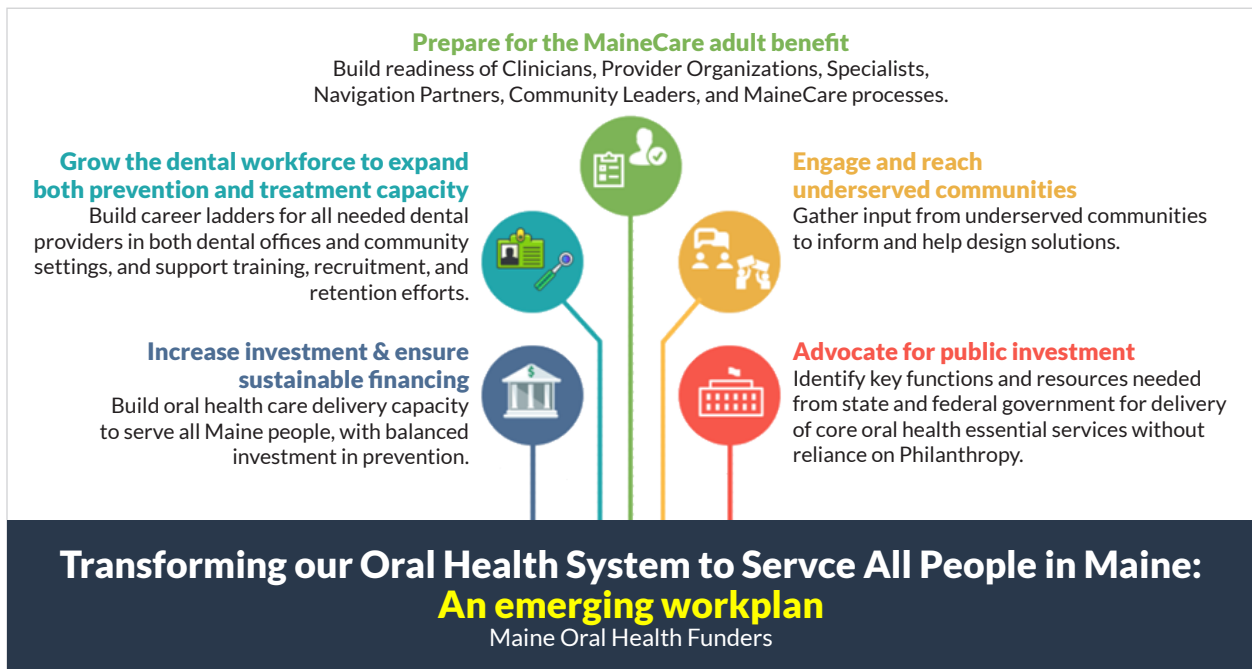
Looking ahead to 2024, the Health Integration Action Team will:

- Continue to lead the Dental Steps for ME pilot program, promote the video library, and seek feedback and recommendations from the eConsult model field test.
- Proceed with the CareQuest grant project, designing systems changes to support oral health for children involved with the child welfare system.
- Facilitate increased medical dental integration at the provider level, including interprofessional trainings on Silver Diamine Fluoride and building active collaborative relationships between the professional associations representing pediatricians, dentists, hygienists, and school nurses.
- Support From the First Tooth to expand the Bruce the Dental Health Moose initiative to a total of 20 practices.



Transforming Maine's Oral Health System to Serve All People in Maine

This Maine Oral Health Funders (MOHF) initiative promotes strategic systemic changes focused on improving oral health quality of care and access for all people in Maine. The initial 3-year plan that began in 2021 is working toward the following goals:



✦✦✦ 2023 Highlights

- MOHF continued to fund the Maine Oral Health Care Alliance (MOHCA), nonprofit dental centers who work on issues of shared interest including workforce, policy issues, and collaborative quality improvement strategies.
- In collaboration with the Maine CDC, the MOHF supported the development of a plan to address Maine's public oral health workforce shortage. The final report is expected to be published early in 2024. A draft of the report is available [here](#).
- Partnerships for Health and University of Maine at Farmington initiated a broader financial analysis of the oral health care system. This project is developing a financial analysis approach that can effectively assess the readiness, implications, and viability of emerging models of care that align with the initiative's goals.

🚀 Looking ahead to 2024, the Maine Oral Health Funders will:

- Extend the initiative into 2024, and participating funders will continue to evolve the work plan for the next phase.
- Begin evaluating the efforts of the first three years (2021-2023), and also develop a 5-year plan for moving the initiative forward.



Oral Health Equity

Oral health equity is central to COHN's vision. Acknowledging partner feedback on broader equity concerns, in 2023 the Steering Committee devised an equity statement (see page 2) and action plan. By taking this deliberate approach, COHN aims to guarantee that all Network initiatives intentionally address barriers to equity from the outset.

2023 Highlights

- Cross Cultural Community Services (CCCS) continues to lead the Oral Health Equity Collaborative (OHEC), which brings together community-led organizations and dental care organizations in Greater Portland. With OHEC input, CCCS incorporated an oral health focus into their anti-racism training to support dental staff in better serving Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color. This training was piloted in the fall.
- Disability Rights Maine created an [oral health equity profile](#) highlighting specific challenges that children with disabilities face. The findings indicate that children with disabilities need more targeted support from dental professionals to receive effective oral health care.
- The Health Integration Action Team secured a CareQuest Institute grant to enhance oral health care for children in the foster care system. The initiative involves integrating oral health into intake medical exams, facilitating referrals, bringing mobile clinics to children currently in foster care, and linking older youth to oral health career opportunities.



Frank Martinez Nocito (Maine Health Access Foundation), Eliot Brenner (Klingenstein Philanthropies), Sanaa Abduljabbar (Maine Access Immigrant Network), Sarah Lewis (Maine Access Immigrant Network), Regina Phillips (Cross Cultural Community Services), and Becca Matusovich (COHN) present about COHN's equity work at the Maine Philanthropy Conference in May 2023

Looking Ahead to 2024, COHN partners will:

- Identify resources and actions to address the particular oral health challenges that children with disabilities face, and share these resources with the Network.
- Support the development of additional oral health equity profiles: one for immigrant and refugee populations in central Maine and one for children in foster care.
- Continue to implement actions in the Network's equity plan with support from OHEC, including creating more diversity, equity, and inclusion training opportunities throughout the Network.
- Carry out the Fostering Systems Change initiative and determine next steps for continuing this effort into its next phase.



The Maine Dental Connection

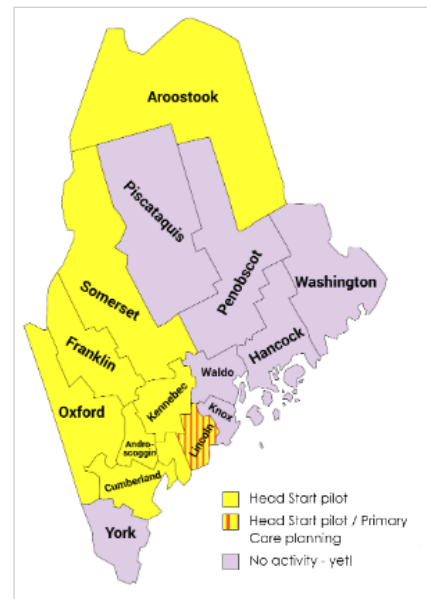
Maine's Virtual Dental Home initiative, now named the Maine Dental Connection, is a community-based oral health care delivery system in which children become established patients with a dental practice while receiving their preventive care and early intervention in community settings, such as daycare, school, and primary care. This initiative has taken root and transformed, intersecting with many other COHN efforts to increase access to oral health care for all of Maine's children.

2023 Highlights

- The Maine Dental Connection communications workgroup developed an [animated video](#) that illustrates how The Maine Dental Connection program works.
- A May site visit brought together 26 stakeholders - from funders to lawmakers, oral health clinical providers to dental insurance representatives - at two Head Start locations in Kennebec County. The group observed the virtual dental home workflow in action with providers from Mainely Teeth and the Waterville Community Dental Center, heard from model founder Dr. Paul Glassman, observed a sample teledentistry exam, and learned about the pilot evaluation from Partnerships for Health.
- An expanded Statewide Planning Group of 20 members formed to usher this initiative into its next phase of expansion and sustainability.

Looking ahead to 2024, Maine Dental Connection will:

- Translate our video (see above) with voiceovers in 5 additional languages and create another video to explain the top 3 minimally invasive procedures frequently used in community-based care to keep teeth healthy without anesthesia or a drill.
- Finalize a financial analysis of Maine's virtual dental home model and develop a calculator tool that active and new partners can use to understand the model's sustainability potential.
- Develop an interactive online toolkit to assist with ongoing implementation and future expansion of the Maine Dental Connection.



By the end of the 2022-2023 school year, over 580 Head Start and Early Head Start children received care through the virtual dental home model at nearly 50 different locations.

In the 2023-2024 school year, 6 non-profit dental partners are collaborating with 7 Head Start agencies to implement virtual dental home services across 9 counties.



Oral Health Workforce

Fueled by funding from Maine Department of Labor (DOL) and Maine Health Access Foundation, COHN's Oral Health Industry Partnership (OHIP) launched in early 2023 with the following core partners: MCD Global Health, Maine CDC School Oral Health Program, Maine Access Immigrant Network, and Cross Cultural Community Services. OHIP's innovative approach aims to expand Maine's oral health workforce, focusing on creating oral health career pathways for populations historically underserved by the oral health care system. The populations of focus include Black People, Indigenous People, and People of Color; young people ages 16-24; immigrants and refugees; and unemployed and underemployed adults.

2023 Highlights

- OHIP beta-tested the new Oral Health Navigator (OHN) training and MCD Global Health is taking the feedback to enhance the training content to ensure multilingual accessibility, include information on oral health equity and care coordination, and align the clinical content with the OHN role.
- OHIP developed a micro-credential badge through the University of Maine System to augment the OHN training and offer participants a credential of value to employers.
- OHIP collaborated with a Masters in Public Health student to create a manual that supports Registered Dental Hygienists to apply for their IPDH authority, which allows hygienists to deliver their full scope of services without supervision by a dentist. This creates career advancement opportunities and improves access to care in more community-based settings and rural parts of the state.



Nikki Williams (Hyphenated Consulting), Sanaa Abduljabbar (Maine Access Immigrant Network), Sarah Lewis (Maine Access Immigrant Network), and Kalie Hess (COHN) present at the Maine Public Health Association's Annual Conference in October 2023.

Looking Ahead to 2024, the Oral Health Industry Partnership will:

- Work with MCD Global Health to finalize and launch the OHN training and support the rollout of the OHN role in a variety of oral health settings, including within the School Oral Health Program.
- Design inclusive recruitment strategies to ensure that OHN training is accessible to the priority populations of the DOL grant, and create opportunities to connect the priority populations to other roles in the oral health sector.
- Support the University of Maine Augusta Dental Hygiene program to create a course to be piloted in summer 2024 to support more hygienists in obtaining IPDH authority.

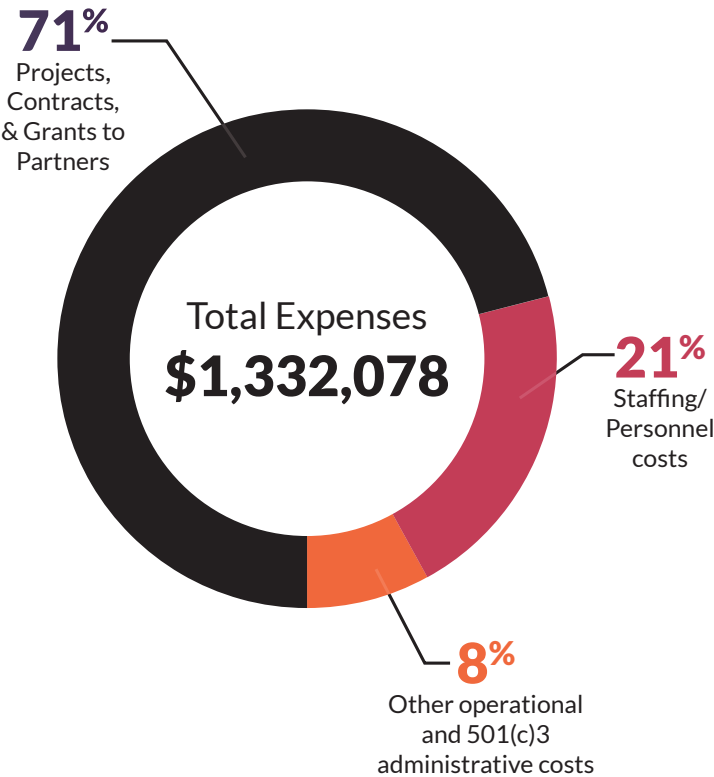


2023 Financial Report

The Sadie and Harry Davis Foundation has provided instrumental core funding to the Children’s Oral Health Network from the beginning, and their continued support not only sustains the operations of the 501(c)3 organization that serves as the backbone of our Network, but also seeds funding for action team projects. As the Network has coalesced around increasingly ambitious initiatives, we have expanded our capacity to secure additional funding for the partners leading and implementing this work, particularly through government grants that support Network initiatives.

Our first federal grant for a COHN initiative came through a Congressionally Directed Spending award that has funded the Virtual Dental Home pilot through mid-2024. In 2023, we took on managing two more large government grants with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): one from the Maine Department of Labor/State Workforce Board to fund the Oral Health Industry Partnership (November 2022 through December 2024), and the other from the Cumberland County government to support the school Blueprint initiative in that county (August 2023 through September 2026).

We are proud of the track record for success that these awards have helped us to establish. We have now built strong grants management systems that comply with federal financial monitoring and audit requirements. Through effectively implementing these projects we position ourselves to leverage future government funding for Network initiatives!



Thanks To Our 2023 Funders

- Sadie & Harry Davis Foundation*
- Betterment Fund*
- Maine Health Access Foundation
- Northeast Delta Dental
- CareQuest Institute
- U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration
- Maine Department of Labor/State Workforce Board
- Cumberland County Government

*Core operational funders



Partner Organizations

The Children's Oral Health Network is constantly seeking out and welcoming new partners interested in working together toward the Network's shared vision of a Maine where all children can grow up free from preventable dental disease. While it is impossible to capture an exhaustive list of all of the organizations who are involved in Network activities, we are grateful for all of the partners who have been actively engaged in the wide range of COHN activities during 2023!

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine	Maine Oral Health Coalition
Advancing Oral Health in the Safety Net	Maine Oral Health Funders
Aroostook Community Action Program	Maine Parent Federation
Betterment Fund	Maine Primary Care Association
Bingham Program	Maine Public Health Association
Bowdoin College	Maine School Nurses Association
Catholic Charities of Maine, Jesse Albert Dental and Orthodontic Center	Maine School Oral Health Program
Community Concepts, Inc.	MaineGeneral
Community Dental	MaineHealth
Consumers for Affordable Health Care	Mainely Teeth
Count ME In!	MCD Global Health
Cross Cultural Community Services	Mercy Hospital/Dr. Harry E Davis Pediatrics
Cumberland County Public Health	Midcoast Maine Community Action
Disability Rights Maine	New England Rural Health Association
Greater Portland Health	New Mainers Public Health Initiative
Hanley Center for Health Leadership	North Theory Ventures
Health and Education Communication Consultants	Northeast Delta Dental
In Her Presence	Northeast Telehealth Resource Center
Island Dental	Northern Light Health
Kennebec Valley Community Action Program	Partnerships for Health
Kennebec Valley Family Dentistry	Penobscot Community Health Center
Klingenstein Philanthropies	Pivot Point Inc.
Knox County Dental Clinic	Portland Division of Public Health
Lincoln County Dental	Promise Early Education Center
Maine Access Immigrant Network	Root Cellar
Maine Association of School Nurses	RSU 13
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention	Sadie & Harry Davis Foundation
Maine Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics	Saving Smiles of Maine
Maine Children's Alliance	Southern Kennebec Child Development Corp.
Maine Community Foundation	Southern Maine Pediatric Dentistry
Maine Congressional Delegation	Spurwink Services
Maine Dental Association	St. Apollonia Dental Clinic
Maine Dental Health Out-Reach, Inc.	Sunrise Opportunities
Maine Dental Hygiene Association	The Opportunity Alliance
Maine Department of Education	University of Maine at Augusta
Maine Department of Health and Human Services	University of New England
Maine Developmental Disabilities Council	University of Southern Maine
Maine Equal Justice	Virtual Dental Home Consulting
Maine Health Access Foundation	Waldo Community Action Partners
Maine Health Data Organization	Waldo County Dental Clinic
Maine Medical Association	Waterville Community Dental Center
Maine Medical Partners	Youth Leadership Advisory Team
Maine Oral Health Center Alliance	