



APPENDIX A: ACCESS TO CARE: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS (2022)

Summary Report: September, 2022.

1. Background

Advancing Access to Care in Ontario is a strategic priority for The Royal College of Dental Surgeons. As approved by Council in November 2021, the College will be initiating a series of activities related to Access to Care. As an initial step in this work, the College recently hosted two multi-stakeholder meetings for the purposes of information gathering during Q2 of 2022. These meetings included a broad range of stakeholders from dentistry, advocacy organizations, and the public health and education sectors to discuss current issues and challenges related to access to oral health care in Ontario. The first meeting (April 7th, 2022) focused on the initiatives or programs that meeting participants have engaged in related to access. The second meeting (June 3rd, 2022) focused on system level considerations and recommendations on ways to advance Access to Care within Ontario. The following report provides a summary of the key themes that emerged from these meetings.

2. Intended Outcomes of the 2022 Access to Care Meetings

A key objective of the Access to Care Stakeholder Meetings included identifying current initiatives and programs within Ontario that aim to improve access to oral health care. Participants were provided an opportunity to present information related to their current work. The meetings were also intended to engage in discussion on key issues related to service delivery, systemic barriers in accessing care, and system level solutions. The multi-stakeholder meetings were also intended to explore the nature of the contributions the RCDSO can make to this issue, and how the College can partner with stakeholders to engage in broader work together.

3. Meeting #1: April 7, 2022

During the first meeting, each participant provided a brief presentation sharing details of their work: the communities they serve, barriers to access observed within their work, and the ways in which their initiatives work towards advancing Access to Care. For a list of programs and initiatives of meeting participants, please see Appendix A. Key themes that emerged from the initial meeting include:

❖ Best Practices in Engaging with Underserved Populations:

Participants discussed the complexities in working with underserved communities, barriers observed in patient ability to access care and best practices in engaging with socially and economically marginalized patients. Discussions also focused on the importance of patient-centered and trauma-informed services, and building trust with communities and patients with complex needs. Collaboration and coordination with Community Health Center's (CHC's) that deliver oral health care was also noted by some participants as a best practice in the delivery of services for underserved populations.



❖ **Health Equity**

A key theme that emerged from stakeholder discussions included the social and economic factors that influence patient health and the ability to access care. Participants discussed the intersection of Access to Care and Health Equity approaches, including the recognition that different populations will have different needs. The ways in which race, gender, age, citizenship status, disabilities and income may impact a patient's ability to access care is a key component in minimizing barriers. Two resources were shared among the group on this theme:

- [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Health Equity Guideline \(2018\)](#)
- [Health Quality Ontario's Health Equity Plan \(2016\)](#)

❖ **Aligned Messaging Among Stakeholders**

Participants discussed the potential benefits of a multi-organizational strategy that would align messaging and advocate for increased access. For example, developing a multi-stakeholder open letter calling for a provincial oral health care strategy. This was discussed within the context of a recent federal announcement on additional spending (\$5.3 Billion) for a new dental program to support low-income Canadians.

4. Meeting #2: June 3, 2022

The second multi-stakeholder meeting focused on systemic issues and barriers related to access. The meeting began by identifying a common understanding of the term *Access to Care*. Using the Penchansky and Thomas definition, as set out in a [Canadian Academy of Health Sciences report on Access to Oral Health Care](#), participants provided their perspectives on the five dimensions of Access: *Affordability, Availability, Accessibility, Accommodation and Acceptability*.

Participants noted the ways in which these dimensions were observed within their work and noted that additional, nuanced considerations should be made as well. This included: system capacity and availability to meet patient needs in a timely manner, the role of caregivers in accessing services, and additional barriers related to language, poverty, mental health, stigma and discrimination.

Participants were asked for their perspectives on ways in which the dental profession can advance Access to Care. Key themes that emerged from this meeting include:

❖ **Remuneration**

Some participants noted a key system level consideration related to remuneration rates for public dental programs that are delivered privately. It was suggested that increasing reimbursement rates for dentists providing care to individuals on social assistance programs such as Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program may contribute to increased access for populations in need of care. A counterpoint was made related to research on this topic which indicates that funding does not impact decisions to provide services to patients on social assistance programs.



❖ **Discrimination**

Participants emphasised the importance of viewing barriers to access through the lens of discrimination. For example, some participants noted scenarios in which patients on social assistance programs have been denied or refused treatment by dentists, often due to low reimbursement fees provided through publicly funded support programs. Some participants observed that barriers to accessing health care services due to income may amount to discrimination. A counterpoint was made that many dentists have a strong sense of ethics and are doing good work to provide service to patients on public programs. Participants discussed the role of the regulator, government, as well as professional obligations of the dental profession as it relates to discrimination and the provision of care.

❖ **Ethics, Professionalism and Access to Care**

A key theme throughout the discussions included the role of dental education. Participants involved in post-secondary education emphasized the importance of ensuring that students have opportunities for community-based learning in order to promote principals of ethics, professionalism and increased access to oral health care in underserved communities. In addition, the role of the RCDSO was discussed, including a recommendation for the College to consider the development of professional standards related to ethics, professionalism and Access to Care. This connects with work that Council approved in its proposal: the development of a Professionalism document.

❖ **Innovation and Alternative Models of Oral Health Care Delivery:**

A focus throughout both meetings centered the importance of learning from innovative models of service delivery. Participants acknowledged that there is currently a patchwork of programs across the province, with lessons to be learned from a broad range of initiatives. Participants highlighted innovative models. For example, community partnerships (i.e.: local Public Health Unit and CHCs that provide oral health care), post-secondary training opportunities that allow students to work with diverse patient populations, and reflections on successful service delivery models in other sectors. Participants noted that Access to Care is a complex issue with many drivers and a multitude of approaches are needed to advance access.

5. Next Steps

The RCDSO's work on Access to Care will continue into 2023 and will remain a Strategic Priority during the 2023-25 Strategic Plan. The College will be proceeding with the proposal approved by Council in November 2021, specifically the proposed work related to ethics and professionalism. The RCDSO will strike a working group to explore these issues, with the ultimate goal of developing a document articulating the principles, values and duties of professionalism. Additionally, College will consider the feedback from meeting participants to consider further work on Access to Care that can continue under the 2023-25 Strategic Plan.



Participant Activities Related to Access to Care in Ontario

The following contains the information stakeholders shared related to the program or initiative they are involved in to support or enhance Access to Care in different communities. The RCDSO will remain in contact with participants and will add or amend this list as necessary.

	Name	Institution	Program/Initiative
1	Dr. Carlos Quiñonez	Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Smile Research Program
2	Dr. Charles Frank & Dr. Lisa Bentley	Ontario Dental Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses in ethics and professionalism • Advocating Government: reimbursement for dentists
3	Dr. Joel Rosenbloom	University of Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMH and U of T Dental Clinics • Addis Abba, Ethiopia Health Collaborative
4	Dr. Abbas Jessani	University of Western Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schulich Oral Health and Community Outreach Service • Education streams of outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3rd year - Four community sites – South London Neighborhood Resource Centre, Regional HIV/AIDS Connections, You Opportunities unlimited and Trans-London. ○ 4th year - Oxford County Community Centre located in Woodstock and Moose Factory
5	Kyle Vose	ODSP Coalition/PWA Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto AIDS foundation • ODSP action coalition
6	Paul Sharma	Ontario Association of Public Health Dentists; Director Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Region of Peel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with community partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth – Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) • Low-income seniors – Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) • Elementary School Program • PPH Dental Screening Clinics • Mobile Dental Clinic • Peel Public Health Dental Program • Community Health Services
7	Tara Breckenridge	Ministry, Seniors Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to attend due to the 2022 Provincial Election
8	Zakaria Abdulle	Alliance for Healthier Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy: Advise provincial government importance of oral health investments. Specifically recommended raising the income threshold for HSO recipients as well as broadening the reach of program to ensure all children and youth have access to dental care.
9	Jack Wasserman	RCDSO Council Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended as observer