

## **A National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health**

### **Action 4. Increase Oral Health Workforce Diversity, Capacity, and Flexibility**

Implementation strategies to increase diversity, capacity, and flexibility must be applied to all components of the workforce: research education, and both private and public health administration and practice. Efforts are needed to:

Change the racial and ethnic composition of the workforce to meet patient and community needs

- Document the outcomes of existing efforts to recruit individuals from diverse groups into careers in oral health education, research, and public health and private practice.
- Develop ways to expand and build upon successful recruitment and retention programs, and develop and test new programs that focus on individuals from underrepresented groups.
- Create and support programs that inform and encourage individuals to pursue health and science career options in high school and during undergraduate years.

Ensure a sufficient workforce pool to meet health care needs

- Expand scholarships and loan repayment efforts at all levels.
- Specify and identify resources for conducting outreach and recruitment.
- Develop mentoring programs to ensure retention of individuals who have been successfully recruited into oral health careers.
- Facilitate collaborations among professional, government, academic, industry, community organizations, and other institutions that are addressing the needs of the oral health workforce.
- Provide training in communication skills and cultural competence to health care providers and students.

Secure an adequate and flexible workforce

- Assess the existing capacity and distribution of the oral health workforce.
- Study how to extend or expand workforce capacity and productivity to address oral health in health care shortage areas.
- Work to ensure oral health expertise is available to health departments and to federal, state, and local government programs.
- Determine the effects of flexible licensure policies and state practice acts on health care access and oral health outcomes.