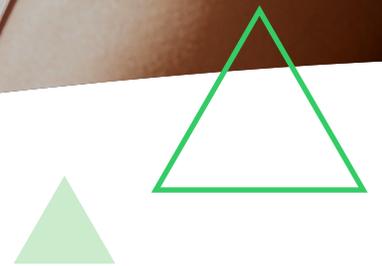


# Our promise to our communities

2020 Community Impact Report



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

# Our promise to our communities

Community is everything to us at Delta Dental. We have been deeply involved in the communities we serve for more than 65 years, guided by a simple promise: to serve their oral and overall health.

In a year as challenging and unpredictable as 2020, keeping this promise was critical, and we are proud to say we never wavered. **The Delta Dental companies and their foundations invested more than \$102.5 million in their communities in 2020, supporting over 2,400 programs and impacting 24.7 million lives — a surge over 2019 so we could support the health of our communities when the need was greatest.** Further, the Delta Dental companies across the country also committed approximately \$1.1 billion in COVID-19 relief to support our communities.

Our community impact efforts in 2020 spanned all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Our support was designed to meet these communities' most pressing needs, including COVID-19 relief to safety-net dental clinics; programs addressing equity and health disparities; and oral health initiatives ranging from direct dental treatment for underserved communities to community water fluoridation advocacy and other oral health programs.

**While oral health remains the cornerstone of our mission, our community impact efforts took a wider lens,** reflecting the many factors that influence a person's oral, mental, physical, and emotional health. For example, as food insecurity gripped our nation, we donated more than \$3 million to food banks — resulting in healthy meals for millions of families, with benefits for their oral and overall health.

As our country grappled with its long history of racial injustice, we also supported organizations like the NAACP, understanding that inequity and racism negatively impact health. To further address the unacceptable health disparities in America, we also prioritized oral health programs that reach underserved communities and communities of color. These initiatives are just one part of a longer journey toward achieving health equity, and our efforts will continue in earnest.

Importantly, our community impact efforts extend beyond financial giving: in 2020, Delta Dental employees volunteered more than 20,000 hours. **Our promise to serve our communities is truly a personal commitment from our entire team, and a deep part of who we are.**

While many of last year's challenges are still with us, we are looking toward a bright future, including finding new and even more impactful ways for Delta Dental to serve our communities no matter what they're facing.



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



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

# A promise kept

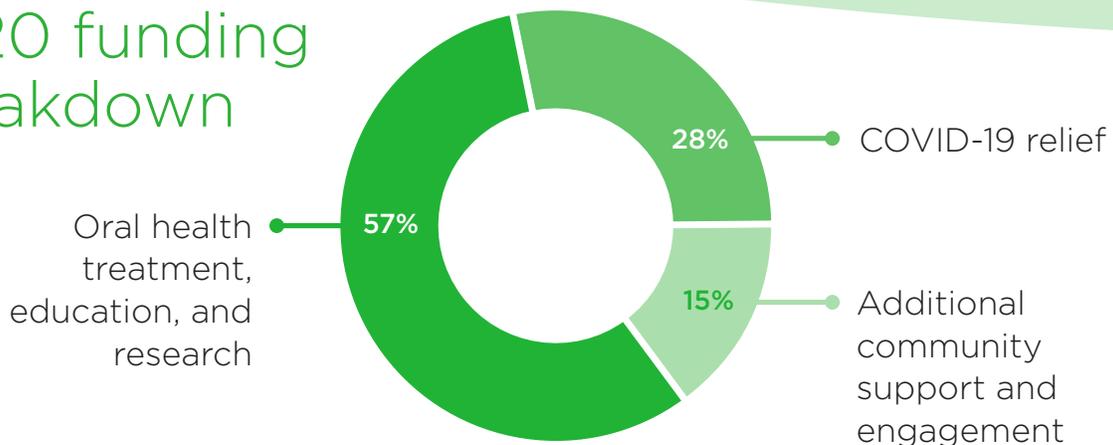
In the face of enormous challenges, Delta Dental remained committed to our promise to support the oral and overall health of the communities we serve. In 2020, the Delta Dental companies and foundations impacted more lives, supported more programs, and made greater financial investments than in any other year in our history.



## In 2020...

- **24.7 million** lives impacted
- **2,400+** programs funded
- Over **\$102.5 million** invested
- **50** states, D.C., and Puerto Rico served
- **20,000** hours volunteered

## 2020 funding breakdown



Note: The data in this report is self-reported from an annual survey conducted by Delta Dental Plans Association of all the Delta Dental companies and covers the time period 1/1/2020 to 12/31/2020. Dollar amounts correspond to funds disbursed within that time period. Employee matching grants are included in the giving total. Lives affected 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.

# Advancing the oral health of our communities

**Oral health is critical to overall health.** A healthy mouth is about more than a bright smile; it is an important indicator of one's broader well-being. Poor oral health is linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, adverse pregnancy outcomes, cancer, dementia, and diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Good oral health is a sign of good overall health, while a healthy smile enhances self-esteem, self-confidence, and mental health, which improve an individual's ability to learn and work.<sup>2</sup>

In a year where health concerns were paramount, nearly 99 million Americans reported they did not have access to dental insurance.<sup>3</sup> Further, the pandemic forced disruptions in care as providers and programs across the country reacted to the rapidly changing environment.

**Through all this uncertainty and change, the Delta Dental companies and foundations stayed focused and identified opportunities to innovate, ensuring underserved communities had access to oral health care.**



## 2020 highlights



**Oral health education programs empowered more than 17.3 million people with knowledge to improve their oral and overall health.** Education programs, from in-school lessons for children to support for dental workforce training, helped lay a strong foundation for the future.



**Community water fluoridation programs gave an oral health boost to 3.9 million people.** Fluoridated water is an important, large-scale initiative, helping reduce cavities by about 25% — yet approximately one fourth of the U.S. population does not have access.<sup>4</sup> The Delta Dental companies and foundations advocated for and directly supported programs to expand access to fluoridated water.



**Dental treatment programs served more than 2 million people, focused on low-income communities.** Each year, untreated, often preventable, oral diseases send 2.1 million Americans to the emergency room for costly visits that do not address underlying diseases.<sup>5</sup> Delta Dental invested in more than 600 dental treatment programs, including safety-net clinics.



**School sealant programs reached more than 124,000 children.** Sealants protect children against 80% of cavities for two years, an important preventive measure that positions them for good lifelong health.<sup>6</sup>

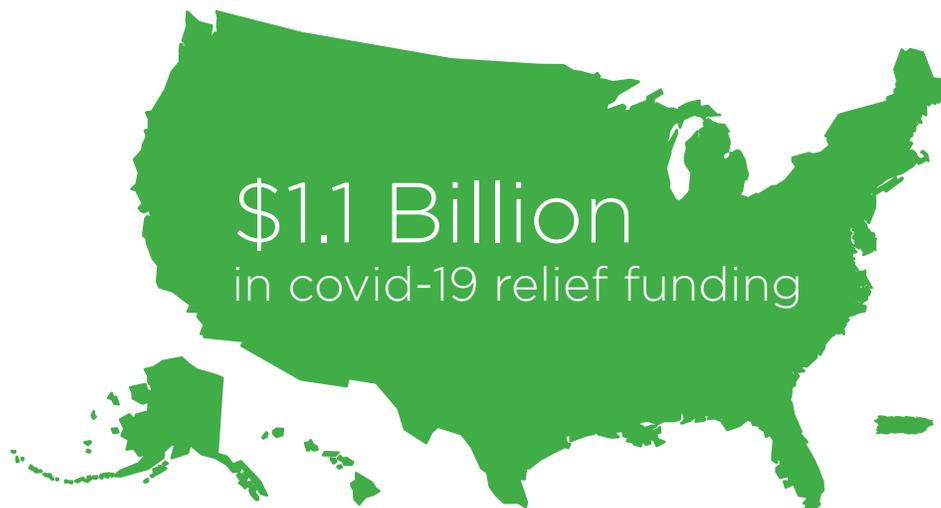


**More than a dozen oral health research projects illuminated new pathways for advancing oral health outcomes.** Delta Dental funded and published research on a variety of topics, from dementia-friendly dental practices to the intersection between culture and oral health.



# Supporting communities through the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic placed an extraordinary burden on communities across the country. **To keep our promise to serve their oral and overall health, the Delta Dental companies across the country committed \$1.1 billion in COVID-19 relief to support our communities.**



In the first months of the pandemic, nearly 70% of America's dental offices temporarily shut their doors and two-thirds were unable to fully pay their staff.<sup>7</sup> In addition to severely limiting short-term access to oral health care, the pandemic threatened a longer-term crisis if local providers and clinics were forced to permanently close. In response, Delta Dental provided low or no-interest loans to safety-net clinics and dentists experiencing funding gaps, ensuring they could continue meeting the oral health needs of their communities. **Our funding also enabled dental offices to acquire personal protective equipment and put other rigorous safety measures in place.**

Delta Dental advocated for oral health at the highest levels, working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to ensure dentists had access to emergency federal relief and could keep serving communities.<sup>8</sup> These efforts were critical to dental offices being able to safely reopen and deliver care. In fact, the majority of adults (74%) and children (88%) saw their dentist in 2020 despite obstacles brought on by the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

**We also supported other urgent needs that communities faced because of the pandemic, investing in local non-profits, including food banks and health clinics, that served their oral and overall health.**

Through our volunteer efforts, we also served our communities by sewing face masks, delivering meals to elderly and homebound individuals, and other initiatives.





## Addressing inequities and disparities in our communities

2020 brought our country's disparities into sharper focus. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and high-profile examples of racial injustice underscored the urgent need to address our country's persistent inequities and disparities.

**Racism is a serious public health crisis that negatively impacts oral and overall health outcomes for communities of color.** Relative to peers, people of color are less likely to have dental insurance; more likely to have untreated dental cavities and tooth loss; and report going to the dentist less frequently.<sup>10</sup> These inequities are unacceptable.

**Delta Dental has long been committed to improving the oral and overall health of underserved and minority communities.** In 2020, we continued to take action by ensuring our oral health programs were reaching these communities. Last year, more than 1,300 programs supported by the Delta Dental companies and foundations prioritized people of color and low-income or uninsured individuals. We also were proud to support leading civil rights and racial justice organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the New Commonwealth Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund.

**Building a more inclusive pipeline of oral health care providers is another critical priority.** Only an estimated 3.8% of dentists identify as Black, yet a large body of research shows Black patients feel more trusting of Black health care providers.<sup>11</sup> In 2020, the Delta Dental companies and foundations supported scholarships and workforce training for dentists of color, including for students at Howard University's College of Dentistry, and are committed to advancing additional initiatives to drive greater diversity in the oral health workforce.

## Dive deeper

For more information and stories about Delta Dental's community impact work across the country, visit [2020cir.deltadental.com](https://2020cir.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 80 million Americans and offering the country's largest dental network with approximately 153,000 participating dentists. Over the last decade, Delta Dental companies provided over \$1.75 billion in direct and in-kind support to improve the oral health of our communities across the country.

## 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 everyone understands the importance of oral health to overall health and has access to the care that they need.



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- 2 Yael Benyamini, Howard Leventhal, and Elaine Leventhal, "Self-rated oral health as an independent predictor of self-rated general health, self-esteem and life satisfaction," [Social Science and Medicine](#), 9/2004; "Basics of Oral Health," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 1/4/21.
- 3 "The State of America's Oral Health Report," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), 4/2021.
- 4 "Community Water Fluoridation," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 1/15/20; "Water Fluoridation Data & Statistics," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 8/28/20.
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- 7 "Fourth wave of HPI polling shows dental practices in early stages of recovery," [American Dental Association](#), 5/11/20.
- 8 "Delta Dental provides critical support to ensure America's dentists receive much-needed federal relief funding," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), 7/10/20.
- 9 "The State of America's Oral Health Report," [Delta Dental Plans Association](#), 4/2021.
- 10 "Dental Care Among Adults Aged 65 and Over, 2017," [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 5/2019; Maxine Feinberg, "Minority Oral Health In America: Despite Progress, Disparities Persist," [Kelly Report: Health Disparities in America](#), 2015; "Disparities in Dental Health and Access to Care," [Pew Research Center](#), 6/27/16.
- 11 Sonya Smith et. al., "Diversifying the Dental Workforce and Maximizing Community Care: Summer Health Professions Education Program (SHPEP) 2006-2015," [American Dental Education Association](#), 11/2018; Clayborne et. al., "Diversity pipelines: The rationale to recruit and support minority physicians," [Journal of the American College of Emergency Physicians Open \(JACEP Open\)](#), 1/2/21.

