

The Oral Health Research Strategic Alliance

The Oral Health Research Strategic Alliance (OHRSA) was created in 2010, as an aim of the initial NIDCR - funded oral health infrastructure grant entitled *Building Collaborative Research Infrastructure to Reduce Oral Health Disparities among Low Income Older Adults* (Project Good Oral Health) (1 RC4 DE021324). The OHRSA was developed:

- 1) to provide information to policy - making bodies, professional organizations, social service and advocacy agencies and state public health officers;
- 2) to identify gaps in oral health research and service to older adults;
- 3) to provide links to information and services;
- 4) to advocate for oral health funding and improvements in oral health delivery infrastructure;
- 5) to contribute to the development of a long term collaborative research agenda to address informational gaps related to older adult oral health.

The OHRSA consisted of 36 members, including representatives from state agencies, university departments, community research institutes, clinical membership organizations and practices, low income senior housing populations, and agencies serving older low income adults in central Connecticut. As we met over time it became clear that our aims and membership significantly overlapped with that of the CT Department of Public Health Task Force on Oral Health for Older Adults.

Recognizing our mutual concerns and goals, in September 2013 the two organizations merged to become the Oral Health for Older Adults Consortium, with two co-chairs chosen from the CT DPH Office of Oral Health and Project Good Oral Health. The merger created one wide-ranging network of community members, researchers, care providers, older adult and oral health advocates, and policymakers to focus on increasing public awareness of the extensive unmet needs for access to dental care and improvement of oral health among older adults, and people with disabilities, and to develop programs to assist in meeting those needs.