



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

June 4, 2015

**Contact:** Nancy Sarieh  
(415) 554-2716, [nancy.sarieh@sfdph.org](mailto:nancy.sarieh@sfdph.org)

### **WITH DENTAL CARIES AT EPIDEMIC LEVELS IN RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS ACROSS SAN FRANCISCO, ORAL HEALTH GROUP HOSTS MISSION MEETING**

**San Francisco, Ca** – To inform and elicit community feedback about the importance of children’s oral health, and continue to learn why some ethnicities are more at-risk, the San Francisco Children’s Oral Health Collaborative, led by the SF Department of Public Health and UC San Francisco, is hosting a community stakeholder meeting in the Mission District of San Francisco. This stakeholder meeting includes community health providers and advocates and is the second in a series of neighborhood meetings, with the first occurring in April in Chinatown.

In San Francisco, nearly 40 percent of children have experienced tooth decay by the time they reach kindergarten, and low-income kindergartners are eight times more likely to have untreated tooth decay, reports the San Francisco Children’s Oral Health Collaborative (SF COH). SFCOH, a San Francisco Health Improvement Partnership (SFHIP) partner, notes that tooth decay disproportionately affects Latino children, who experience more than twice as many cavities compared to white children.

If left untreated, cavities can lead to unnecessary pain, inability to eat or speak properly, extensive and costly treatment, school absences, future oral health problems in adulthood, and overall diminished health and well-being.

Access to dental care is a significant concern for low-income children in California, even though pediatric dental is a covered benefit under Medi-Cal. Because Medi-Cal reimbursement rates are among the lowest in the country, Denti-Cal providers are often unable to cover their operating costs. This is particularly challenging in high cost areas such as San Francisco.

Tooth decay and periodontal disease are the two biggest threats to oral health and among the most common chronic diseases in the United States. In fact, former Surgeon General Regina Benjamin called oral diseases a “silent epidemic.”

Dental caries is largely preventable through dental sealants, fluoride varnish, healthy eating habits, daily oral care at home and routine dental visits. However, many parents, medical



providers and even dental providers do not fully understand their critical roles in preventing this disease.

A cross-sector initiative designed to improve the health and wellness of all San Franciscans, the San Francisco Children's Oral Health Collaborative coordinated the [San Francisco Children's Oral Health Strategic Plan 2014-2017](#) toward making the city cavity-free. The plan identifies the most effective, evidence-based actions each group can take to make the most impact. Target groups are children under 10, pregnant women, low-income communities of color, recent immigrants and other populations most at risk.

The San Francisco Children's Oral Health Collaborative is supported by the Hellman Foundation. The Mission community stakeholder meeting is co-hosted by [Mission Neighborhood Centers Head Start/Early Head Start](#), [Instituto Familiar de la Raza, Chicano/Latino/Indigena Health Equity Coalition](#) and the [Central American Resource Center \(CARECEN\)](#).

**Event Details:**

Tuesday, June 9, 2015 from Noon to 2:00 p.m.  
362 Capp Street, San Francisco  
Mission Neighborhood Centers Head Start/Early Head Start

**Speakers:**

Scott Wiener, District 8, San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
Santiago Ruiz, Executive Director, Mission Neighborhood Center

**About SF Department of Public Health**

The Mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans. SFDPH strives to achieve its mission through the work of two main Divisions – the San Francisco Health Network and Population Health. The San Francisco Health Network is the City's only complete system of care and has locations throughout the City, including San Francisco General Hospital Medical Center, Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center, and over 15 primary care health centers. With a broad community focus, the ultimate goal of the Population Health Division is to ensure that San Franciscans have optimal health and wellness at every stage of life, and, to achieve this, the Division is comprised of various branches dedicated to core public health services for the City and County of San Francisco, such as health protection and promotion, disease and injury prevention, disaster preparedness and response, and environmental health services.



Visit us at [www.sfdph.org](http://www.sfdph.org) • Follow us on twitter [@SF\\_DPH](https://twitter.com/SF_DPH)

### **About UC San Francisco**

UC San Francisco (UCSF) is a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. It includes top-ranked graduate schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing and pharmacy, a graduate division with nationally renowned programs in basic, biomedical, translational and population sciences, as well as a preeminent biomedical research enterprise and two top-ranked hospitals, UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital San Francisco. Please visit [www.ucsf.edu](http://www.ucsf.edu).

###