

# PHHS BLOCK GRANT SUCCESS STORY 2016

---

## COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

THE TAP IS ON! THE LARGEST CITY IN THE NATION STARTS FLUORIDATION.

---

**Issue:** San Jose, California, is the largest city in the nation without fluoridation. Community water fluoridation adjusts the natural fluoride concentration of a community's water supply to a level optimal for the prevention of dental caries. In the United States, community water fluoridation has been the basis for the primary prevention of dental caries for 70 years and has been recognized as one of ten great achievements in public health in the 20th century. Tooth decay is the #1 chronic disease of childhood. Over 70% of California children experience tooth decay by the third grade (2006). East San Jose is home to 443,000 residents. Almost 1 in 10 residents are between ages 0 and 5. In East San Jose:

- More than 25% of families live below 185% of the federal poverty level.
- In 2001, 50% of elementary school children had a history of tooth decay and nearly 33% had untreated tooth decay.
- Racial disparities are apparent in adult tooth loss and child tooth decay rates; ethnic minorities and those earning lower incomes are particularly affected.
- More Hispanic children were not covered by dental insurance than Asian or White.
- A higher percentage of third-grade Hispanic children (43%) had untreated tooth decay.
- Less African American and Hispanic middle- and high-school students visited the dentist in the last 12 months than other ethnic groups.
- One-third of adults do not have dental insurance.
- One in 3 adults have lost at least one permanent tooth due to tooth decay or gum disease.
- An initial cost analysis to fluoridate San Jose was cost prohibitive.

**Intervention:** San Jose was identified by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Fluoridation Advisory Committee (FAC) as the largest metropolitan city in the state without fluoridation. CDPH (including the fluoridation consultant from the UCSF School of Dentistry supported by PHHS Block Grant funds) worked with FAC and the California Dental Association Foundation to explore strategies to fluoridate San Jose. PHHS Block Grant funds are critical to the success of the CWFI program; no other source of funding for fluoridation exists.

# PHHS BLOCK GRANT SUCCESS STORY 2016

---

## COMMUNITY WATER FLUORIDATION IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

THE TAP IS ON! THE LARGEST CITY IN THE NATION STARTS FLUORIDATION.

---

- In 2009, a public/private partnership developed among key partners (The Health Trust, Santa Clara Public Health Department, Health Advisory Commission) to work with local water systems to improve the oral health of the county by fluoridating the water.
- In 2012, Santa Clara Valley Water District voted to implement fluoridation at three treatment plants. Other partners included (1) the State Water Resources Control Board, (2) First 5 Santa Clara County, (3) Santa Clara Dental Society, (4) Silicon Valley Leadership Group, and (5) San Jose Water.
- Planning and informational meetings were held. Ongoing fund-raising efforts are led by The Health Trust.
- On-site training was provided by CDC for water engineers/operators in San Jose.
- CDPH worked with partners and the local health department to issue a Provider Notification Letter and develop a community outreach campaign.
- The first water treatment plant is ahead of schedule and will begin fluoridating in early December 2016.

**Impact:** High risk communities will start receiving fluoridated water. Water fluoridation offers significant cost saving to almost all communities. Every \$1 invested in fluoridation saves \$38 in treatment costs.