

**ASTDD Fluorides Committee Annual Report**  
**Jan 1, 2024 – Dec 31, 2024**

Chair: Bruce Austin (OR) Consultant: Judy Feinstein

Members: Tracy Boehmer (CDC)\*, Richard Crask (KY), Aimee Duval-Critser (ID)\*, Geri Edrei (FL)\*, Emily Firman (WA)\*, Susan Fisher-Owens (CA)\*, Emily Horney (NC), Julie Janssen (IL), Johnny Johnson (FL), Dustin Jurgenson (VT), Jay Kumar (CA), Jennifer Lansing(CO), Elizabeth Lense (ADA)\*, Clifford Lisman (NJ)\*, Robin Miller (VT)\*, Dixianne Parker (GA)\*, Becky Parnian (NJ)\*, Nicole Payonk (PA), Shakalpi Pendurkar (CA)\*, Howard Pollick (CA), Karen Raju (CA), John Rudolph (KY), Gina Sharps (WV)\*, Dione Snitker (MO)\*, Gwen Sullentrup (MO), Sandy Sutton (MI), Lee Wright (CDC)\*, Tooka Zokaie (CA)

\* These individuals were members for part of the year.

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1. List any new members or subcommittee members: Susan Fisher-Owens (CA), Clifford Lisman (NJ), Robin Miller (VT), Shakalpi Pendurkar (CA), Dione Snitker (MO).

2. Describe the purpose of your committee:

The Fluorides Committee provides support to ASTDD members with the partnerships, policies and guidelines needed for the appropriate use of fluorides in community/population-based programs designed for dental caries prevention. The Committee works to assure that ASTDD positions and policies are presented in all appropriate venues, and oversees, reviews or provides input for activities that ASTDD may be involved in regarding fluorides; in addition, technical support is provided as needed to state dental directors and fluoridation contacts. The Committee also coordinates annual fluoridation awards in collaboration with ADA and CDC at ASTDD's Annual Meeting.

3. List your committee accomplishments for the last calendar year.

- The Fluorides Committee met 10 times during 2024.
- The annual Fluoridation Awards were identified in collaboration with state dental directors, the American Dental Association (ADA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and announced during ASTDD's Awards Ceremony, held at the NOHC on April 14 in St. Louis, Missouri. Achievements in 2023 were recognized in four categories, along with the 2024 Fluoridation Merit Award. [Details](#) may be viewed via the ASTDD website.
  - 50 years of fluoridation (82 individual awards among 29 states; Illinois and Kentucky each had 10 communities, and Michigan and Ohio each had 7). Three communities noted their 75th anniversaries, going back to 1948 – two in Rock County, Illinois, and Madison, Wisconsin.

- In 2023, 8 communities in 6 states (Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Texas, Vermont and Utah) defeated challenges to community water fluoridation).
  - Other awards presented were for state fluoridation quality, recognizing six states for consistency in maintaining optimally fluoridated water in over 90% of the adjusted water systems or population supplied by adjusted water systems.
  - The 2024 Fluoridation Special Merit Award was presented to the Arcora Foundation (Seattle, Washington) and the California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center (COHTAC) (UCSF, San Francisco).
  - State dental directors again received a toolkit (by email) including templates and instructions for award certificates along with sample cover letters and media release materials with ideas for recognizing awardees as a way to promote increased recognition and/or media coverage.
- Related to the annual Fluoridation Awards, at its June meeting the Committee agreed with a proposal to add 10-year and 25-year awards to the formal program of awards. These will be more meaningful and effective for ongoing promotion than starting with a 50-year anniversary; the existing 50- and 75-year awards will continue. These new awards will start with the 2025 NOHC.
  - On behalf of ASTDD and the Committee, Judy provided ASTDD's annual report on fluoridation activities (June 2023 to March 2024) to the National Fluoridation Advisory Committee (NFAC), an advisory committee of ADA's Council on Advocacy for Access and Prevention (CAAP). NFAC's 2024 meeting was held following the NOHC on April 18th. Judy participated in the meeting via video connection as did Fluorides Committee member Dr. Howard Pollick. Committee members Jay Kumar and Johnny Johnson also serve on NFAC.
  - On behalf of the Committee, Judy coordinated one webinar designated as a CWF Community of Practice (CoP) session for the 20 states funded by the CDC's Division of Oral Health. Following the practice of several previous years, it was open to fluoridation coordinators and others working with fluoridation in all states and to the Fluorides Committee. Held on January 23, it had 59 participants; the responses of the 32 who responded to the poll at the end were very positive. The topic was positive messaging targeted for specific audiences; fluoridation coordinators from North Dakota (Vanessa Bopp), Kentucky (Richard Crask), Georgia (Dixianne Parker), Missouri (Gwen Sullentrup) and Michigan (Sandy Sutton) shared their approaches and experiences. Most of what was shared concerned working with water system operators. Judy also promoted the use of a dedicated listserv for the grantees, and shared numerous CWF related postings from other non-ASTDD sources.
  - Along with Chris Wood, Sandy Tesch, and Kathy Phipps, Judy attended the 2024 CDC Grantee closeout meeting in March in Atlanta and facilitated the CWF table in two networking sessions. She compiled a list of questions, issues and potential areas for ASTDD support going forward. These issues will be relevant for all states and territories and not limited to the states funded under the new grant.

- Along with Chris Wood, Sandy Tesch, and Kathy Phipps Judy attended the CDC “Kick-off” meeting in Atlanta (Oct. 29-31) for the new grant cycle and was able to connect with most of the state fluoridation contacts, including those from previously funded states as well as several new staff and those from newly funded states.
- Judy convened an initial CWF Community of Practice session on November 20 for the 15 newly funded states. Twenty-five people attended, representing 14 of them. Attendees identified current concerns and topics they would like to cover; the Fluorides Committee provided some initial feedback. Sessions will likely be set up every other month.
- On behalf of the Committee, Judy continued to represent ASTDD with an ad hoc group of states that meets roughly quarterly to discuss general water fluoridation concerns; discussion has touched on messaging when confronting rollbacks, and other issues, such as the NTP monograph, approaches to operator training across states, and how to bolster our collective ability to maximize early warnings about cessation attempts. The problems are not unique to each state and system although they may present that way; looking at the commonalities may be helpful in resolving them. During the group’s December 2024 meeting, the group discussed 90-day notification processes, how to update the National Network for Public Health Law’s listing of state statutes and regulations (spearheaded by the PA Coalition for Oral Health); and notification letters for non-compliance issues as a constructive communication tool, as used by Kentucky.
  - A smaller group met through March 2024 to focus on problem-solving issues identified with the New Wave [tablet feeder] system. A central issue was that the composition of the tablets appears to inhibit their ability to completely erode (dissolve), a problem that is exacerbated by water temperature. As a result, there is unacceptable residue, and levels are inconsistent. In addition, solutions such as water heaters were unacceptable because they lacked NSF certification. This last meeting included the manufacturer, who said that he could not proceed further with the system without financial support.
- Following notice that the National Toxicology Program’s monograph was scheduled for release, Judy sent an email to the states and other interested parties on August 20 informing them and including ASTDD’s guidance from August 2022. Over the next several days, she forwarded partner responses, and then on August 26<sup>th</sup> an update of ASTDD’s guidance. The document was updated with the current date, several additional references in a resources section, and a few small changes to bring it up to date. Various emails and inquiries from state and partner contacts continued through the rest of the month. Additional communications continued through September and October, with the addition of reactions to the Ninth Circuit Court’s ruling on the Food & Water Watch lawsuit against the EPA, and the Cochrane Review on CWF in October. Judy forwarded multiple emails and organizational statements providing reactions and messaging to ASTDD lists. These postings continued through the year, as articles were published in various media, many picked up by ASTDD consultant Matt Jacob.

- Related to the previous item, the Committee’s October meeting focused on reactions and responses to the court case ruling and how this relates to the NTP report, how to manage public response, identify audiences, the role of ASTDD and partners, etc. Guest Matt Jacob outlined a “proposed two-pronged strategy to preserve community-level prevention of tooth decay,” as a way forward; that is, ASTDD’s materials should be updated to acknowledge both the NTP monograph and the court ruling, as well as the Cochrane Review. Thoughts at this point were and continue to be to emphasize approaches that “stay the course” with CWF but also to support community-level efforts around early prevention and intervention of dental disease (e.g., school-based programs), and that these are not mutually exclusive. Discussion touched on involvement of the private sector, being aware that strategies need to acknowledge concerns about fluoride in general (e.g., varnish, toothpaste), and that the bottom line is that *neither the monograph nor the court decision were about optimally fluoridated drinking water*. The issue of naturally occurring fluoride at levels greater than 0.7 and particularly over 1.5 also needs to be addressed, with talking points if possible. A continuing priority will be to develop and adapt effective messaging.
  - As part of ongoing efforts to develop a broad set of talking points that states can use to respond to questions from their administrations, the media, local officials and the public because of the NTP report in particular, Judy worked with Matt Jacob and three representatives from the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC), (Tanya Dorf Brunner, Helen Hawkey, and Sarah Holland) to draft common language to share with partners. Tanya, Helen, Sarah, Matt, Judy, and Chris Wood, along with Fluorides Committee chair Bruce Austin and Committee member Johnny Johnson met together to discuss strategies. One pending next step will be to make these and a range of professional organizations’ statements and media articles available to ASTDD members, along with talking points, as a sort of “messaging toolkit.” [Note: the best way to accomplish this was still under consideration at the end of 2024.] In the meantime, ASTDD BOD member Robin Miller, also a committee member, compiled similar lists of resources and provided them to the state dental directors in December and January.
- Committee member Jay Kumar presented an ASTDD webinar titled “An Analysis of the NTP Monograph Concerning Fluoride” on December 9th. About 90 people attended; roughly two-thirds responded to a poll at the end, and all rated the quality as either “excellent” or “good.” The majority either strongly agreed or agreed that they would be able to use the information in their work. The presentation slides and accompanying background paper are posted under ASTDD Tools and Resources in the Fluorides and Fluoridation section of the Members Only side of the ASTDD website.
- Dr. Kumar was one of two presenters in February 2024 in a fluoridation update webcast cosponsored by the ADA and NIDCR.
- The Committee offered input for a proposal from Matt Jacob for a weekend workshop at the 2025 NOHC. The session, titled “On the Hot Seat: Answering Questions about

Fluoride with Confidence,” was accepted and is scheduled for the afternoon of April 5. Judy and Committee member Johnny Johnson will co-present with Matt.

- At the suggestion of Committee members Richard Crask and John Rudolph (Kentucky), Judy submitted an abstract for a site visit to a fluoridating water utility in Orlando. Although not an official NOHC event, it is listed in the registration brochure for Sunday morning, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Richard and John will work with the host water system to plan the visit. Cathy Bridges and Shannon Harp of Florida’s Oral Health Program made the necessary introductions with local water system staff.
- Responding to a request from Katrina Holt on behalf of the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety (NCHBHS) oral health team (a workgroup on Head Start oral health issues), Judy compiled a table displaying toothpaste use recommendations from the ADA, AAP, AAPD and CDC for children younger than age 6, and also offered a list of points to consider in determining any further action. The workgroup has identified FDA guidance directing parents of children younger than age 2 as a probable cause of many parents refusing any use of fluoride, but of toothpaste in particular. The NCHBHS oral health team wanted to pursue the issue with the FDA; what they will do is unclear, but ASTDD can likely use Judy’s compilation when reviewing documents on toothpaste.
- We continued our use of Curate, a data-mining company that provides a searchable database of local government meeting agendas and minutes and scans meeting minutes, agendas, planning documents, etc., from local government entities. ASTDD shares a subscription with the American Fluoridation Society (AFS); we have continued using an enhanced and more comprehensive version to which we upgraded in November 2021. Judy has a check-in call with a Curate staff-person about twice a year to monitor our search terms and maximize our results.
  - Until mid-March 2024, reports combining Curate findings with postings from Google Alerts were sent at least once but more often twice a month to state dental directors, state fluoridation contacts, the Fluorides Committee, ANOHC, and AAP’s Fluoride Responders listservs. The regular postings were suspended when we started to explore options for other ways to track activity, specifically to develop a more interactive tracking function rather than the “Fluoridation Alert” that is largely a narrative. Judy continues to review Google Alerts and Curate posts. These reports can serve as an early warning system on fluoridation-related activity. If either tool picks up something with more immediacy, emails are sent to individual dental directors and state fluoridation contacts if known. In many instances, the Curate post or Google Alert has provided the first notice for a state oral health program of a fluoridation discussion scheduled for a public meeting and allowed the SOHP to be better prepared. Numerous emails were sent during the year.
  - We continue to look at how to refine our tracking ability, working in collaboration with the ADA and AFS, so that we can more efficiently keep up with and provide a summary report on outcomes of known CWF rollback and initiation activities. CDR Lee Wright, Applied Public Health Epidemiologist at CDC

DOH, offered suggestions for the spreadsheet's construction and management. This would not replace the Alerts, which is more of a narrative but would use the same information along with other variables. One issue has been how to collect information directly from states since not all states are able to use common survey tools (e.g., REDCAP, Google Forms, Google Docs).

- Although no new documents were completed in 2024, Judy, Committee member Julie Janssen and a small workgroup continued to work on an “umbrella” document on fluoride modalities, which will be presented as an issue brief rather than as a policy statement. The work was essentially suspended waiting for the release of the NTP report and the EPA court case ruling. By the end of the year, the conclusion emerged that as noted above, although ASTDD’s materials should be updated to acknowledge both the NTP monograph, the court ruling, and the Cochrane Review, they should also clearly emphasize approaches that “stay the course” with CWF and support community-level efforts around early prevention and intervention.
- Changes were suggested for ASTDD’s SDF Fact Sheet (thanks to Robin Miller and Debora Teixeira in Vermont), and the updated document is posted on the ASTDD website.
- TA/Consultation was provided during the year as follows (email unless otherwise noted):
  - CO: efforts to develop/tailor CWF fact sheets; suggested actions to take or advise when natural fluoride levels fall between the secondary maximum contaminant level and maximum contaminant levels and associated enforceable standards - suggested posting as a query to the ASTDD lists and provided the PDF of ASTDD’s 2023 fact sheet on naturally occurring fluoride.
  - CT: responded to questions about answering fluoridation inquiries from water operators; sent some information and suggested the question be posted to the CWF listserv; it was and received numerous replies. Provided suggestions for finding resources for a presenter for a workshop for water operators
  - FL: Provided information to assist in responding to a constituent.
  - IA: Facilitated obtaining a missing CDC Quality Award certificate and also clarified the Fluorides Awards process.
  - KY: provided background information on national fluoridation legislation and related issues.
  - MT: provided updates on the history of the New Wave system and other CWF information (Zoom). Provided suggestions for strategies for communicating with a water system where reports indicated under-fluoridation for an extended period (e-mail).
  - NY: compiled information for advocates in New York in preparation for a hearing in Albany on implementation of CWF.
  - WA: Arcora Foundation about potential speakers and resources for a fluoridation meeting.
  - WV: clarified awards history

- VT: general local issues; forwarded an inquiry to ASTDD fluorides-related listservs, seeking suggestions for a local water system with additive quality concerns.
- ADA: Provided information to use for media releases about the ADA/ASTDD/CDC annual fluoridation awards.

Committee members also provided assistance throughout the year.

4. Describe the future activities planned by your committee:

- Continue to serve as resource, as a group and/or individually, to the CDC-funded states in their work toward CWF objectives, through the Community of Practice and listserv, as well as to all states and territories.
- Complete review and revision of older fluorides resource documents, working with committee members. Note that these revisions have been considerably delayed due to capacity issues but also as noted because of the delay in the release of the NTP report and EPA court case, out of concerns about the impact on our documents.
- Continue to collaborate with partners (e.g., ADA, AFS, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Public Health Dentistry) to identify fluoride advocacy opportunities.
- Develop and maintain regular communication with ADA for fluoride issues, e.g., monitoring state/local activities (local actions, referenda), public outreach, etc.
- Continue to work as requested with ASTDD evaluators to evaluate CDC-grant-funded fluoridation activities, particularly the Community of Practice.
- Ongoing assessment of our use of Curate to keep informed of fluoridation-related activity at the municipal level, along with Google Alerts. Develop a report on cumulative activity based on these data that more clearly reflects rollback attempts and outcomes as well as successful initiatives to implement CWF.

5. Describe any subcommittees your committee uses, their roles and activities:

There are occasional ad hoc subcommittees that are identified to assist in particular activities, such as a document review process.

6. List any unmet needs of your committee (e.g., members, funding, etc.):

None anticipated.