



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DENTAL PROVIDER SURVEY

Tobacco Cessation & Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Reduction Activities in Dental Offices

A look at current counseling practices, barriers, and interest in training among Los Angeles County dental offices.

53

RESPONDENTS

53 dentists practicing
in LA County

BACKGROUND

Proposition 56 (2016), California's statewide tobacco tax, provides key funding for the LA County Department of Public Health's Oral Health Program (OHP). As a Proposition 56 recipient, OHP supports the initiative by incorporating tobacco-cessation and sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) reduction activities into its community oral health efforts.

To understand current practice and identify gaps, OHP surveyed dental offices across Los Angeles County about tobacco-cessation and SSB-reduction counseling, barriers, and interest in training, and examined patient education materials to ensure they are written in plain language and available in multiple languages.

Financing is another area where patients need support. Dental credit cards carry significant debt risks due to deferred interest, and dental debt already burdens a large share of U.S. households. OHP asked whether staff educate patients about these risks before they sign up, as such products can place patients in long-term debt.

Interest in training outpaces current practice.

About half of Los Angeles County dental offices counsel patients on tobacco cessation, and roughly six in ten provide guidance on reducing sugar-sweetened beverage, yet the most common barrier is a lack of training or resources. At the same time, most offices want training that could help close this gap.



Dentists also expressed interest in attending a free CEU workshop on how to counsel patients on tobacco cessation.

01 Current Counseling Practice

Tobacco cessation counseling

Currently offered at the dental office

- Yes — 26 offices
- No — 27 offices



Sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) reduction counseling

Currently offered at the dental office

- Yes — 30 offices
- No — 23 offices



Plan to start, among dentists

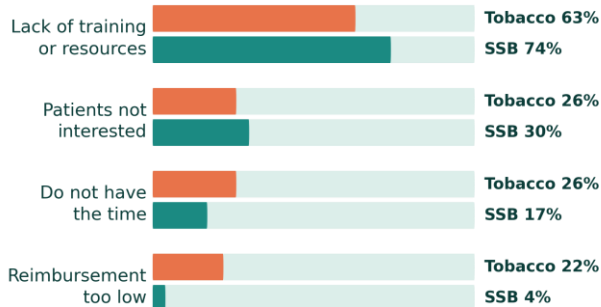
Of dental offices not currently providing counseling, some plan to start soon.



02 Why Dental Offices Aren't Counseling

Barriers, compared across both programs

Share of dentists citing each reason (multi-select)



Training demand vs. current capacity

All respondents (n=53)

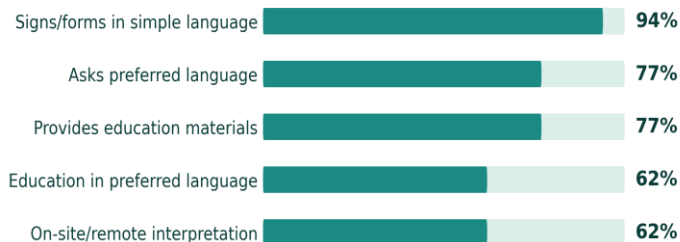


Of the nine dentists not interested in CEU training, most (six) said it was because they already know the subject, suggesting a need for refresher or advanced-track content rather than indicating a lack of interest in the topic itself.

03 Patient Education

Language and health literacy supports in place

Share of dentists answering "Yes" (n=53)



Coverage and financial counseling

Medi-Cal acceptance and dental credit cards

43%

of dental offices accept Medi-Cal patients (23 of 53)

42%

offer dental credit cards to patients (22 of 53)



Nearly one in three dental offices that offer dental credit cards do not counsel patients on the interest-rate and debt implications before they sign up.

Source. Provider survey of dental offices, Los Angeles County (N = 53 confirmed as currently practicing in LA County). Percentages were calculated out of the 53 respondents who answered each question, excluding blank responses unless noted otherwise. Barrier and future-plan questions were asked only of offices not currently providing the relevant counseling and allowed multiple selections, so shares do not sum to 100%.

NEXT STEPS: Free, ready-to-use patient resources that dentists and staff can share with patients to support tobacco cessation and healthier beverage choices.

Tobacco Cessation Toolkit for Dental Providers: <https://oralhealthsupport.ucsf.edu/tobacco-cessation-california-dental-providers-toolkit-and-1-hour-webinar>

Choose Health LA — Refresh (SSB reduction toolkit): <https://choosehealthla.com/refresh/>

UCSF Oral Health Support — Rethink Your Drink: <https://oralhealthsupport.ucsf.edu/category/rethink-your-drink>

August 2026 Funded by the California Department of Public Health Office of Oral Health Contract # 22-10173

