



## WEEKLY WEDNESDAY UPDATE

The Weekly Wednesday Update is our newsletter which we email every Wednesday with oral health, health and policy updates from around the state and nationally.

To view past issues [click here](#).

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**Weekly  
Wednesday  
Update.**

## Advocating to Cover Basic Preventive Dental Care

Since July 2022, adults enrolled in Medicaid in Kansas have had coverage for fillings, crowns, and gum disease care. Over 7,500 Kansans have been able to access this life saving dental care. The care remains out of reach for many, in large part because coverage for basic preventive dental care - exams, x-rays, and cleanings - can be challenging to access. These services are not included in the Medicaid dental program for adults, and while they can be



accessed, many providers and consumers find it confusing to determine how. People must receive this basic preventive dental care before they can get restorative care like fillings. When it is hard to understand how the most essential and basic dental care is covered, providers are reluctant to care for adults and adults are less likely to receive it.

This year Oral Health Kansas is leading the advocacy effort to cover basic preventive dental care in Medicaid. By ensuring the Kansas Medicaid program covers dental exams, x-rays, and cleanings for adults, one more barrier to accessing dental care will be eliminated. The House and Senate will hold budget hearings in February, and we will be asking them to allocate funding for this basic preventive dental care. **Add your organization's name to the list of supporters of this policy change by filling out [this form](#).** More information is on our [basic preventive dental care advocacy webpage](#).



## The Silent Struggle: Unraveling the Stress of Poverty on Families

This month is Poverty Awareness Month. Over the last two weeks we discussed the challenge of making toothbrushing a priority and eating healthy foods when a family lives in poverty. One issue that affects all aspects of life and well-being for a family is the stress of constantly facing financial hardships.

Limited financial resources often force families to prioritize basic needs like shelter, food, and transportation over preventive and routine dental care. As a result, oral health concerns can escalate, leading to more significant and costly problems down the line. If a family is worried about whether they can afford both the phone bill and the grocery bill this month, it is hard to be able to think about seeking routine or even urgent dental care. Basic needs must be met first, and even though routine oral healthcare is fundamental to health, it often does not make the list of basic needs when a family prioritizes its limited resources.

Parents grappling with financial instability often find themselves caught in a relentless cycle of worry and anxiety. The fear of not being able to provide for their children's essential needs looms large, creating a chronic state of stress. This persistent anxiety can lead to a range of

mental health issues, affecting decision-making, relationships, and overall emotional resilience.

The societal stigma surrounding poverty can exacerbate the stress experienced by families. The constant pressure to conform to societal expectations can lead to feelings of shame and inadequacy, further isolating families from the support networks and healthcare they desperately need.

Addressing the intersection of poverty and oral health requires a comprehensive approach that includes community-based initiatives, affordable dental care programs, and educational outreach. By breaking down barriers to access and raising awareness about the importance of oral health, we can contribute to a healthier and more equitable future for families facing economic hardships.

Each week we have mentioned the importance of understanding where people are and what they face. Community Action Programs across Kansas are dedicated to helping families fight poverty. Learn more about the realities of what people living in poverty face from the [Kansas Association of Community Action Programs](#).

Let us know what you think at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org), and come back next week as we wrap up this story series by discussing how improving access to dental care and health care can help tear down barriers for families.



## How Healthcare Providers and Dental Providers Can Help with Tobacco Cessation

Healthcare providers and dental providers play a critical role in helping tobacco users understand the health risks of tobacco products as well as helping them access free help to support their quit journey. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), gum (periodontal) disease is an infection of the gums and can affect the bone structure that supports your teeth. In severe cases, it can make your teeth fall out. Smoking is major cause of severe gum disease in the United States. Gum disease starts with bacteria (germs) on your teeth that get under your gums. If the germs stay on your teeth for too long, layers of plaque (film) and tartar (hardened plaque) develop. This buildup leads to early gum disease, called gingivitis.

The [Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) conducted by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) shows that almost one in four (24.6%) Kansas adults (18 years and older) use any tobacco product, defined as conventional cigarettes, e-cigarettes or smokeless tobacco. Tobacco use is more widespread within certain groups, such as people with a mental health or substance use condition.

KanQuit is a free service that offers confidential help to quit tobacco to all Kansas residents 18 and older through online and telephone programs. Additional benefits are available to people with qualifying mental illnesses or substance abuse conditions, including ADHD, bipolar disorder, depression, drug or alcohol abuse disorder, anxiety, PTSD and schizophrenia.

By partnering with tobacco QuitLines such as KanQuit, dental providers can connect people to evidence-based resources and increase patients' chances of quitting successfully. To help dental partners leverage QuitLines, the American Dental Association teamed up with the North American Quitline Consortium to develop a toolkit, [Tobacco & Vaping Cessation - Implementing & Fostering Quitline Referrals: A Guide for Oral Health Professionals](#). This guide equips oral health professionals with essential recommendations to address smoking, vaping, and other tobacco use within the dental practice and connect patients to free evidence-based QuitLine support. This implementation guide will help oral health providers understand dental care teams' role in supporting tobacco cessation by leveraging QuitLines.



## Upcoming Events

- Course: An Introduction to Value-Based Care in Oral Health: Moving from Volume to Value, 1 CE. Click [here](#) for the course information.
- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- **Webinar:** Reducing Consumption of Added Sugars, February 14 at 12:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- **Webinar:** The Critical Role of Black Dental Providers, February 22 from 12-1pm CST. Register [here](#).
- Missouri Oral Health Policy Conference, March 7-8, 2024, DoubleTree by Hilton, Jefferson City, Missouri. Register [here](#).
- Alliance for a Healthy Kansas monthly meetings, [Events | Alliance for a Healthy Kansas 2022 \(expandkancare.com\)](#).
- **Save the date!** 2024 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 8.



Could you be the next Faces of OHK or do you know someone? Faces of OHK highlights accomplishments, from winning an award, new job, retirement, or anything you feel proud of! Send us an email if you want to be the next Faces of OHK. Email us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).



## Sugary Drink Display

We have Adult and Children's Sugary Drink Display's available for reservations. These displays are eye catching at exhibits, schools, library, dental offices, clinics and just about anywhere you see them!

We only have a limited amount so please sign up soon if you're interested in reserving one. Click [here](#) to learn more about sugary drink display reservations!

## Follow Us



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