



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.

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January 31, 2024

Volume 15, Issue 4

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**Weekly
Wednesday
Update.**



Get Involved in Improving the Medicaid Adult Dental Benefit

Over 20 statewide and local organizations are supporting Oral Health Kansas' advocacy this year for the Kansas Medicaid program to cover basic preventive dental care for adults. Since July 2022, adults enrolled in Medicaid in Kansas have had

coverage for fillings, crowns, and gum disease care, but 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 through the managed care organizations, 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 growing list of supporters of this policy change by filling out [this form](#).** More information is on our [basic preventive dental care advocacy webpage](#).



Celebrating Notable Kansans

On Monday we celebrated Kansas Day - the anniversary of the date Kansas became the 34th state. In honor of Kansas Day we would like to recognize notable Kansans who have influenced the fields of dentistry and public health.

[Lucy Hobbs Taylor](#) was the first woman to earn a DDS in the United States. She received her doctorate in dentistry in 1866 from the Ohio College of Dentistry. In 1867 she and her husband, who also later became a dentist, moved to Lawrence, Kansas. The two of them had a practice at 8th and Massachusetts until 1886. She was also known for campaigning for women's rights in the Republican party. The city of Lawrence notes her significance in the community on their [history webpage](#).

[Samuel Crumbine](#) also got his start in Ohio but made his mark in Kansas. He was a physician who moved to Dodge City in 1890 and moved to Topeka in 1904 to become the Secretary of the State Board of Health. He was one of the country's foremost pioneers in public health. He

was known for campaigns to stop using common drinking cups on trains and in public buildings and to encourage people to stop spitting on the sidewalks. There is a [statue and pocket park honoring Dr. Crumbine's work](#) at the Kansas Health Institute in downtown Topeka.

On Kansas Day it's nice to stop and remember some notable Kansans who made an impact on dental care and public health for Kansans and people across the country.



Why is National Children's Dental Health Month So Important?

Children's Dental Health Month is celebrated in February to bring light to the importance of oral health in children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that more than 1 in 5 children aged 2 to 5 years has at least one cavity in their

baby teeth. Having healthy baby teeth is important for a path to years of a healthy mouth!

We often hear parents say baby teeth will fall out so it doesn't matter. It DOES matter. They're essential to their permanent teeth. What can you do to start making toothbrushing a habit now?

- If your child is a baby, wipe gums with a warm wash cloth. This helps your child get used to having someone cleaning her mouth by wiping milk or formula from gums.
- If your child is under the age of 3, use a toddler sized toothbrush and use a smear of toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice from when the first tooth erupts. Floss!
- Age 3 and up, use toothpaste the size of a pea. Floss!

Sesame Street has some fun videos you can show your child on healthy eating. Watch [here](#)! Oral Health Kansas has a list of [Tips and Tricks](#) free to print and share. The one pagers are in English and Spanish. Below are just a few ideas:

- Baby Teeth Are Important
- Braces
- Healthy Eating
- Thumbsucking
- Thumbsucking-Kicking the Habit

[Super Smiles for Your Child](#) has videos, games and fun ways to teach your child about healthy oral health habits.



Impact of Improved Dental Care Access on Families in Poverty

A person's teeth can be seen as a marker of poverty. As we have discussed throughout Poverty Awareness month, dental care takes a backseat for families struggling with income insecurity. Not being able to access dental care can have profound consequences. Unaddressed dental issues can lead to chronic pain, infections, and even more severe health problems. Importantly, the visible signs of dental problems can impact self-esteem and confidence, influencing social interactions and job prospects.

The federal government requires insurance plans cover dental care for children through Medicaid, CHIP, and the Affordable Care Act, but there is no similar requirement for adults. This means adults must find private dental insurance on their own or an employer-sponsored dental plan. For people working in low wage jobs, dental insurance is almost never offered. But there are policy options that can make lasting changes in improving access to dental care for adults living in poverty. Oral Health Kansas and our partners successfully advocated to bring [Medicaid coverage of dental care for adults](#) in 2022 and 2023. The Kansas Medicaid program now covers fillings, crowns, gum disease care, and dentures. In the first full year, over 7,500 adults covered by Medicaid received life changing dental care.

This policy change is a big step forward, but more is needed, including the [2024 advocacy for Medicaid to cover basic preventive dental care for adults](#).

Culturally competent care is another important way of helping meet the dental needs of families living in poverty. This can include offering appointment times outside of typical working hours. It also can include learning more about why people living in poverty are not always able to make their oral health a priority. Meeting people where they are and helping them without judgment goes a long way toward a more inclusive approach to dental care.

A healthy smile goes beyond oral health. It opens doors to better employment opportunities, improved self-esteem, and a brighter future. Together we all can help people get and keep a healthy smile.



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.



This week [Senator Carolyn McGinn](#) [announced she will retire](#) at the end of her current term in January 2025. She has served in the Kansas State Senate for 20 years and has been a champion for



oral health policy. In 2011 Oral Health Kansas presented Sen. McGinn with the Outstanding Policymaker Award in recognition of her recommendations for studies about the effectiveness of dental benefits for all Kansas Medicaid beneficiaries. Since then she has been a central player in allocating funding to establish dental benefits for adults covered by the Kansas Medicaid program. Sen. McGinn has had an open door and been receptive to learning about unmet dental needs and how to address the challenges. We applaud her 20 years of service to Kansas and wish her the best in her well-deserved retirement.



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!

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