



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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or click here to sign up for our [Weekly Wednesday Update](#).

Register Before Time Runs Out!

Each year we look forward to the Conference on Oral Health. It's an opportunity to share the work Oral Health Kansas has done throughout the year, the hot topics that are national and around our state and we also ALWAYS leave energized from all our participants. You think you are learning but you are also teaching US! Join us virtually or in person.

When: Friday, November 7

Breakfast and registration begin at 7:30am CST. Sessions begin at 8:30am CST. We'll wave goodbye at 3:30pmCST.



Where: Virtual or in person at KU Edwards Campus (BEST Conference Room), 12600 S Quivira Rd, Overland Park

Here are the topics for the day!

State of the State of Oral Health in Kansas

Stuart Little, PhD, Little Government Relations; Rep. Allen Reavis, DDS, Tanya Dorf Brunner, MS, Oral Health Kansas

Accessible Oral Health: Building Confidence in Dental Teams to Serve People with Disabilities

University of Kansas Project ECHO team

Fluoride in Kansas: Trends, Policies, and Public Health Impact

Melissa Burroughs, BA, CareQuest Institute for Oral Health

KEYNOTE: Positive Exposure by Rick Guidotti

Providing Thoughtful Care for People Who've Experienced Trauma

Trina Morgan, BEd, MOL, Kansas Children's Service League

Pathways to Oral Health: A Collaborative Approach to Improving Access to Medicaid Dental Care

Tim Kolling, Compass Marketing & Advertising Partners, Oral Health Kansas Staff and Pathways Partners

■ **Breakout Sessions in the afternoon: Community Approaches to Meeting Community Needs
A Dental Hygiene Approach to Community Outreach**

Kylie Austin, RDH MS ECP-III, UMKC School of Dentistry; Tammi Engel, RDH, ECP-III, Northwest Smile Center; Kathy Hunt, RDH, ECP-II, Oral Health Kansas

■ **Dental Care for Individuals with Disabilities: Behavioral Strategies to Improve Patient Experience and Cooperation**

Christie Stiehl, BCBA, Stiehl Behavioral Consulting, LLC; MaryAnne Lynch Small, MPH, BDS, Oral Health Kansas

■ **Integrating Dental Care into Medical Care**

Celeste Carpenter, RDH BS ECP III, Swope Health; Shawn Oprisiu, RDH, BS ECP III, Swope Health; Julie Thiesen, RDH BS ECP III, Swope Health, Abigail Richwine, RDH, BS, Oral Health Kansas

You will also get the chance to visit exhibitors and be the first to see who the winners are for the 2025 Excellence in Oral Health Awards!

The opportunity to earn 5.75 CE's is available!

Register at this [link](#) and find out more information about the conference.



New Toothbrushing Video Supports Caregivers in Residential and Home Settings

As part of the [Pathways to Oral Health](#) initiative, [Oral Health Kansas](#) has released a new caregiver training video and a training guide designed for both family caregivers and direct support workers who assist people with disabilities in daily oral health routines. This longer, in-depth resource builds on the [Confidence in Every Smile](#) video series, offering practical guidance and demonstrations for those who provide hands-on care in homes and residential care settings.

The training highlights adaptive brushing and flossing techniques, introduces helpful tools for individuals with limited mobility, and provides strategies to make oral care safer, more comfortable, and more effective. By pairing step-by-step demonstrations with clear explanations, the video serves as both an educational and empowering resource for anyone supporting someone with a disability.

To reinforce these lessons, Oral Health Kansas has also developed a training guide and three supplemental materials designed to help trainers use the Pathways to Oral Health instructional video. These resources outline learning objectives, a comprehensive training agenda, handouts, and optional activities to provide a consistent message for residential caregiver staff.

This project was led by **Kathy Hunt, RDH, ECPII, Program Director at Oral Health Kansas**, whose commitment to improving oral health equity for people with disabilities has guided much of the Pathways work. Through conversations with both family members and professional caregivers, Kathy heard a consistent message: oral hygiene can be one of the most challenging daily care tasks. Caregivers want to provide good care but often lack training in adaptive techniques or access to visual, easy-to-follow guidance. This video was created to fill that gap—helping caregivers feel more confident and supported in their vital role.

Why Caregiver Training Matters

Caregivers, whether they are parents, family members, or professional support staff, play a central role in maintaining the health and quality of life of people with disabilities. Yet oral health care can be overlooked or rushed because of time constraints, behavioral challenges, or a lack of accessible training. This video helps bridge that gap by providing:

- Practical demonstrations of brushing and flossing for individuals with disabilities.
- Adaptive strategies to accommodate physical or behavioral challenges.
- Tips for creating a calm, safe, and comfortable oral care routine for both caregivers and individuals receiving care.

Recognizing Early Warning Signs: Behavior Speaks

In addition to the training video, **Oral Health Kansas** has developed a new flyer, **Behavior Speaks**, to help caregivers recognize early signs of dental pain or discomfort in individuals who may not be able to communicate it verbally.

Changes in behavior such as increased irritability, refusal to eat, touching the face, or changes in sleep patterns can often signal that something is wrong. The **Behavior Speaks** flyer serves as a quick reference for identifying these signs early, prompting timely dental care and preventing more serious issues.

This resource complements the caregiver training video by helping caregivers not only perform daily oral care but also detect when professional attention may be needed.

Looking Ahead

The training video is intended to serve as an ongoing resource for families, residential staff, and organizations that support people with disabilities. By improving caregiver confidence and consistency, it supports better daily oral health and, ultimately, enhances comfort, dignity, and overall well-being.

Access the Training

The caregiver training video is now available on the **Pathways to Oral Health** website and **YouTube**. Family caregivers, residential care home staff, and direct support professionals are encouraged to watch and share it as part of their ongoing commitment to high-quality care. To reinforce learning, there are also a free **Training Guide** and three supplemental handouts available on the Pathways to Oral Health website.

Watch the caregiver training video at pathwaystooralhealth.org



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

OHK Visits with UMKC Dental and Hygiene Students

Abby Richwine, Oral Health Kansas' (OHK) Education Coordinator, visited with almost 100 dental and dental hygiene students during the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Vendor and Career Fair. Students stopped by interested to learn more about OHK. Abby was able to educate students about the increase in dental rates as well as the importance of learning more about becoming a Medicaid provider. She encouraged them to become familiar with the **My Dental Care Passport** to use when they begin their careers and how treating individuals with disabilities is not as difficult as it seems because they can adapt their practice as they see fit! This event was a great opportunity to connect with future dental professionals, share valuable resources, and inspire them to play an active role in improving access to oral health care for all.

National Health Education Week

National Health Education Week is a time to celebrate the power of education in building healthier communities. Every conversation, lesson, and community program that shares knowledge about health helps people make informed choices and lead fuller, healthier lives.



Good health starts with good information, and that includes our smiles! Oral health is closely connected to overall wellness, from nutrition and heart health to confidence and quality of life. By sharing knowledge about preventive care, fluoride, healthy eating, and regular dental visits, we help people make choices that protect both their teeth and their overall health.

Health educators, dental professionals, and community partners all play a vital role in making oral health information accessible and empowering everyone to take small steps toward brighter, healthier smiles. This week and every day, continue to share the message that oral health is part of your overall health and an important factor to take care of!



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](#).
- The Conference on Oral Health will be held Friday, November 7 at the KU Edwards Campus. Click [here](#) for updates on the conference.
- SPEAK Up! (Self-Advocates Promoting Empowerment and Access in Kansas) conference on Saturday, November 8. Click [here](#) for information.



During National Health Education Week, we recognize two of our staff members that provide oral health education to many people throughout the state. Kathy Hunt, RDH, ECPII, Dental Program Director and Abby Richwine, RDH, BS, Education Coordinator develop, coordinate, plan, and help execute the consumer and provider education strategies for the Pathways to Oral Health project. They also develop messaging and educational materials for individuals with disabilities, caregivers, and dental providers. Their valuable insights has created the success of the project!



Kathy Hunt



Abby Richwine



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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