

## 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.](#)**



Stuart Little



Tanya Dorf Brunner



Allen Reavis

## Register Before Time Runs Out!

Where can you hear about oral health and health policy changes at the state and national levels? How about a discussion about the Medicaid dental rate increases in Kansas? You will learn about this during the first session of

the **2025 Conference on Oral Health**, during the **State of the State of Oral Health in Kansas** with Stuart Little, Ph.D, Little Government Relations; Rep. Allen Reavis, DDS, and Tanya Dorf Brunner, MS, Oral

Health Kansas. With just a little over a week to go, speakers are busy preparing to bring you lively discussions!

**When:** Friday, November 7

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

**Where:** Virtual or in person at KU Edwards Campus (BEST Conference Room), 12600 S Quivira Rd, Overland Park. Park in Lot B. Parking is free. A view of the map is [here](#).

Exhibitors will be lined up in the conference room along with attendees for immediate networking opportunities. Visit each exhibitor and see what you can earn! Take this opportunity to also thank our sponsors!

This year we're providing three breakout sessions to allow you to choose a topic that you want to learn more about. But you can only choose one! (Please note: Our previous planned session, Dental Care for Veterans has been canceled).

### **Breakout Sessions in the afternoon: Community Approaches to Meeting Community Needs**

- **Expanding Impact: How Dental Hygienists can Lead 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

Register now to save your spot! Click [here](#) to see the full agenda and register.

**Attendee Rate:** \$125 (walk up rate \$150)

**Student Rate:** \$20 (walk up rate \$25)

Let's come together to learn, share, and shape a healthier, more connected future for oral health!

## **Use Your Voice to Help More Dentists Join Medicaid**

Access to dental care should not depend on where you live or how you're insured-but in Kansas, it often does. Fewer than **1 in 4 dentists** in the state accept Medicaid, and **44 counties** currently have no Medicaid dental provider at all. Western Kansas is especially impacted, where long drives and limited options make even basic dental care out of reach for many families.

But this issue isn't limited to rural areas. Even in larger cities like Wichita, people with disabilities often travel for **over an hour** just to find a dentist who accepts Medicaid and can meet their dental care



needs. The shortage of providers touches every part of the state.

To help change that, [Oral Health Kansas](#) and [Pathways to Oral Health](#) have developed a [Consumer Toolkit for Recruiting Dentists](#)-a simple, practical guide designed for community members, advocates, and caregivers who want to make a difference.

The toolkit gives you everything you need to start the conversation:

- **Fact sheets** you can share with local dental offices.
- **Sample emails, texts, and talking points** for reaching out to dentists in your area.
- **Social media posts and graphics** to raise awareness and inspire action.
- **Information about recent Medicaid improvements**, including higher reimbursement rates and expanded adult coverage.
- **Resources for dentists**, such as provider enrollment links and [helpful advice on provider enrollment](#), disability care training, and [My Dental Care Passport](#) to support inclusive care.

You don't need to be an expert to make a difference. Every email, call, and social post helps show Kansas dentists that their participation in Medicaid truly matters-and that our communities are ready to support them.

When more dentists open their doors to Medicaid patients, families get the preventive care they deserve, and individuals with disabilities can maintain their oral and overall health with dignity and confidence.

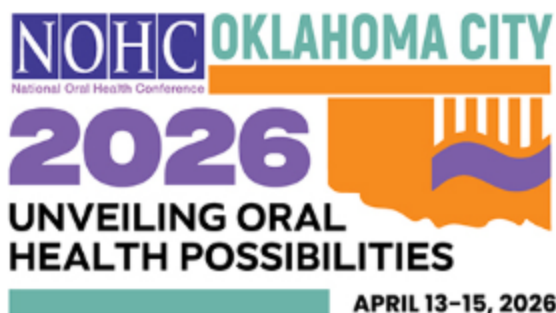
Together, we can close the gap in dental access-one conversation at a time.



## OHK Visits with Students about Dental Careers

Kathy Hunt, Dental Program Director and Abby Richwine, Education Coordinator, attended the Kansas Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Conference at Kansas State University in Manhattan on October 28. Over 1,000 high school students participated in the career exploration event.

Kathy and Abby hosted a booth for high school students to learn more about dental careers and ask questions. Abby gave a presentation about the different careers in dentistry, and students asked great questions about schooling, specialties, and experience. Introducing high school students to dental careers helps grow the workforce and expand access to care where it's needed most.



## We're Headed to the 2026 National Oral Health Conference!

Oral Health Kansas submitted several proposals for 2026 National Oral Health Conference presentations, and they all were accepted! The National Oral Health Conference is the leading annual event for anyone interested in learning, networking, and advancing dental public health. The

conference is in Oklahoma City April 13-15, 2-26. We're excited to share our work with colleagues from all over the country.

- "Using Storytelling to Inspire Communities and Expand Care" is a 90-minute panel about our marketing and messaging campaigns in the Pathways to Oral Health initiative. Tara Dimick from Compass Marketing and Melanie Jacobs from our Lived Experience Advisory Group will join staff on the panel.
- "Confidence in Every Smile - Tools and Training for Oral Hygiene Support" is a 90-minute panel about our new video training series for people with disabilities and caregivers. Our colleagues from Kansas Neurological Institute who are implementing the caregiver training program will join staff on the panel.
- "Elevating Voices, Driving Change, Building National Impact" is a 90-minute panel proposed by American Network of Oral Health Coalition (ANOHC) that will tell the story of national investment in oral health coalitions.
- "Small Steps, Big Impact: Practical Oral Health Projects in a Time of Limited Resources" is a 90-minute panel proposed by ANOHC that will feature several states' creative and low-cost approaches to creating educational programs. Staff will serve on the panel.

Learn more about the conference by visiting [their website](#).



**That face, right? ❤️**

## Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition Visits with Topeka Families

The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition took advantage of parent teacher conference and trunk or treat events this month to reach families about Brush Book Bed and the importance of brushing teeth and flossing every day! The first day, Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition chair, Kate Hamilton, visited with families as they visited Sheldon Head Start for parent teacher conferences. She was able to reach about 200 Head Start children and siblings.

She, along with two amazing volunteers, also attended a Trick or Treat on the Trail at Pine Ridge. There they met with families and reached a little over 100 children! Kate found out that families



were interested in learning about oral health and listened when she talked about the best way to keep brushing routines every night. This is exactly what we want parents to hear!

Thank you to Delta Dental of Kansas for providing Smile Kits for us to give families.

If you're interested in learning more about the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition, email us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).



## 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:** Connecting Oral Health to Health Justice: What Every Advocate Should Know, October 30 at 2:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Motivational Interviewing: How and Why to Collaborate with Patients, November 6 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- 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.
- **Webinar:** The Oral Systemic Connection: The Importance of Oral Health in Patients with Intellectual or Developmental Disorders (IDD), December 9 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).



Thank you to our 2025 Conference on Oral Health sponsors. We appreciate them supporting our conference and attending our conference. This event is possible because of your support! If you see our sponsors at the conference next Friday, November 7, please tell them thank you!

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Wichita State University - Evelyn Hendren Cassat Speech -  
Language Hearing Clinic - Bronze Sponsor

Platinum Sponsor



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## 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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