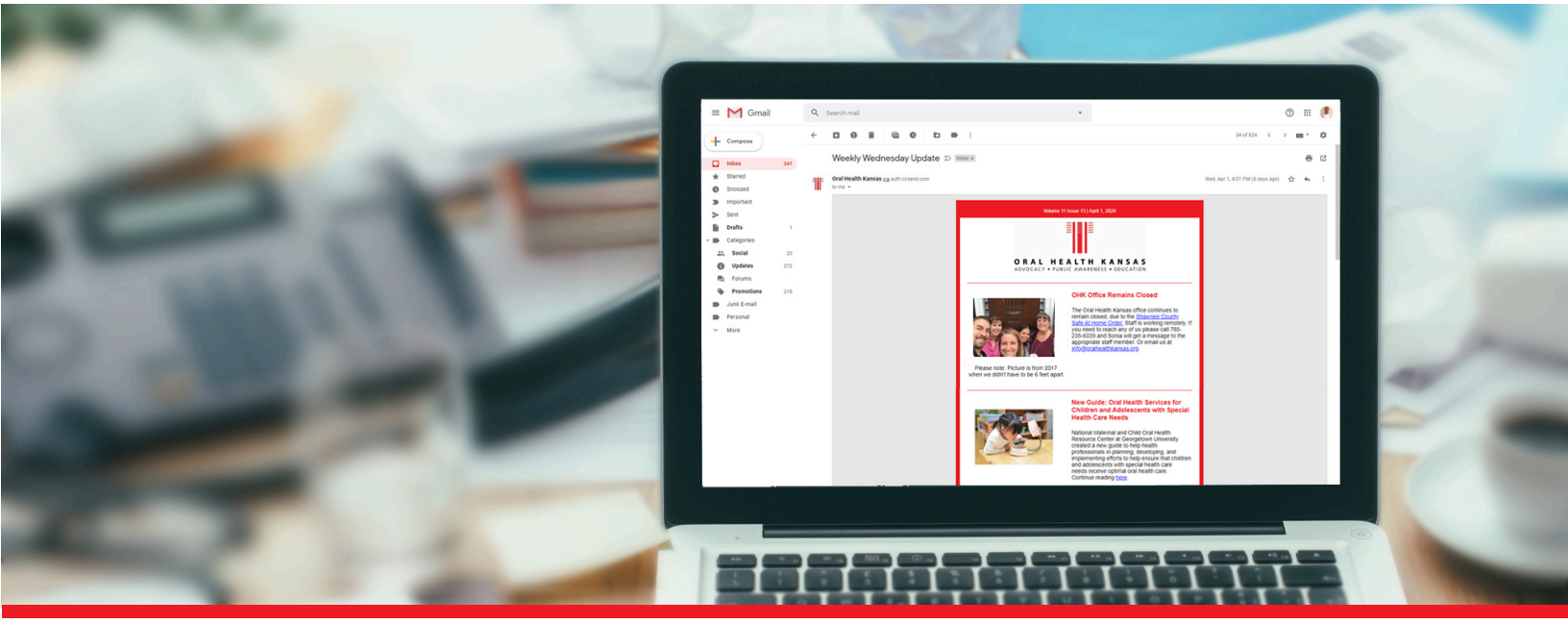
ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



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.

Scan the QR code

or click here to sign up for our Weekly Wednesday Update.

November 11, 2026

Volume 17, Issue 44



Help Veterans Receive the Dental Care They Deserve

Veterans Day, is today, Wednesday, November 11. On this day, we honor those who served. It's also a good moment to look at a gap that not very many are aware of: that many veterans cannot get dental care through the VA, even when they're enrolled in VA health care. Of more than 9 million veterans who are eligible for medical care through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), only 26% are eligible for dental care.

A visual report from CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, based on the State of Oral Health Equity in America survey, shows that veterans are struggling with unmet oral health needs. Key findings include:

- Older US veterans are much more likely to have had at least six teeth removed (31%) the older nonveterans (20%).
- Veterans are more than twice as likely (7.7%) as nonveterans (3.0%) to seek care at a hospital emergency department (ED) for an oral health condition.
- Older veterans are more likely to have other chronic health conditions (53%) compared to older nonveterans (47%). Conditions like diabetes and heart disease can be worsened by poor oral health.
- Younger veterans (ages 18-59) are less likely to have seen a dental provider (65%) in the past year than older veterans (72%).

A CareQuest Institute for Oral Health poll shows that this issue already has broad, bipartisan support from Americans across the country, with 9 out of 10 voters agreeing that we should improve dental coverage through the VA, so all veterans qualify for dental services.

This summer, Oral Health Kansas joined national advocates on Capitol Hill to meet with Congress. A primary focus of the meetings was support for H.R. 210, the Dental Care for Veterans Act, which would make dental care a standard benefit for all veterans enrolled in the VA health system. This would eliminate current statutory restrictions and expands comprehensive VA dental care to all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, treating dental care as part of the standard medical benefits package. As of late 2026, it has not received a hearing.

The Dental Care for Veterans Act was introduced in the House of Representatives in September of this year. It would expand VA dental eligibility so that dental care is covered in the same way as other medical services, phasing in expanded eligibility over four years. It would direct the VA to create a pilot program within one year to expand rural veterans' access to community-based dental services across at least 10 locations in no fewer than 5 states. The Dental Care for Veterans Act would make sure those who served can get the dental care that keeps them healthy, comfortable, and well for years to come.



Conference Week is Here!

Yes, it's the week everyone has been waiting for! We'll be at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park on Friday, November 13 for the Conference on Oral Health. We're excited to see everyone there. Our registration list continues to grow! This will be a great opportunity for you to network with new faces or visit with someone that you may see every year at the conference. Our conference brings together dental professionals, advocates, consumers, students and professors to discuss ways we can improve oral health in our state! You do not need to be a dental provider or oral health expert to attend.

One recent change we have to our speaker line up. Due to health reasons, Dr. Jody J. Fiorini is no longer able to join us for the breakout session, Resilience, Well-Being, and Success in the Workplace. However,

we are thrilled to welcome Rachel Gladden, Project Specialist with HOPE Services and Rohan Sreevas Paramal Viswanathan, BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery), MBA in Healthcare Management Student and Marketing Research Student Assistant at HOPE Services as our speakers. We are appreciative they are joining us!

Friday, November 13

We'll open doors at 7:30am. Walk around visiting exhibitors and have some breakfast on us! Be seated by 8:30am for welcome statements. Spend the day with us until 4:00pm. And earn up to 7.25 CE's for the day! Join the plenary sessions and breakout sessions listed below. There will be chances to win prizes!

8:45am Oral Health Policy and Election Update

Speaker: Mallory Lutz, BA, Little Government Relations

This year we'll have THREE Breakout Opportunities:

10:15am (choose one)

Enhancing Patient-Centered Care with the My Dental Care Passport & Sensory Modifications Guide

Speakers: Dr. MaryAnne Lynch Small, MPH, BDS, Oral Health Kansas; Abby Richwine, RDH, BS, Oral Health Kansas; Deb Pochop, Northwest Smile Center; Billie Donohue, CDA, CPC-A, Rogers Family Dentistry; Shelley Howard, RDH, BS DH, MHSA, UMKC School of Dentistry

Resilience, Well-Being, and Success in the Workplace

Speaker: Rachel Gladden, Project Specialist with HOPE Services and Rohan Sreevas Paramal Viswanathan, BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery), MBA in Healthcare Management Student and Marketing Research Student Assistant at HOPE Services

Building Your Advocacy Skills

Speaker: Mallory Lutz, BA, Little Government Relations

11:45am Excellence in Oral Health Awards Luncheon

12:00pm Keynote Speaker

Shifting the Narrative: Amplifying Voices

Whit Downing, Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

1:15pm AI in Dentistry
Speakers: Tatiana Y. Lin, Kansas Health Institute

2:30pm The State of Dental Practice: Costs, Insurance, and Access
Speaker: Deesha Bhaumik, PhD, MS American Dental Association Health Policy Institute

3:45pm Wrap Up

4:00pm Adjourn

Conference attendee registration fees:

Regular Attendee Rate: $125 | Walk-in Attendee Rate: $150
Regular Student Rate: $20 | Walk-in Student Rate: $25

Register here! If you do not have an account with the Iris conference platform, you will need to create an account.

We will close online registration on November 12 but walk in registrations on November 13 will be available.



Oral Health Kansas Connects with Students

Last week, Education Manager, Abby Richwine, was busy meeting with students and sharing the various career opportunities in the dental field. She first attended the Shawnee Mission School District Career Fair for students with behavioral difficulties. During the event, she introduced students to careers in dentistry and discussed opportunities within the dental field. Students participated in the Acid Attack activity, which demonstrated how everyday foods and drinks can affect their teeth. Abby also discussed the importance of good oral health habits and daily dental care.

She also attended the Fall Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Conference as an exhibitor, where she connected with more than 75 students and introduced them to career opportunities in dentistry. She discussed various educational pathways into the dental field, the importance of gaining experience through job shadowing, and opportunities to become a dental assistant. Abby also highlighted the benefits of working in a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and the opportunity to serve underserved populations. These conversations helped expose students to the diverse career paths available in dentistry and encouraged them to consider a future in the dental workforce.

COMMUNITY CARE NETWORK OF KANSAS

Community Care Network of Kansas Seeks Workforce Development Specialist

Community Care is seeking a Workforce Development Specialist. Community Care is the statewide primary care association for a network of community care clinics. The Workforce Development Specialist serves as a workforce development consultant to member clinics by assessing workforce needs, analyzing recruitment and retention challenges, recommending strategic workforce solutions, and guiding implementation of evidence-based workforce initiatives.

You can find a full job description and how to apply at this link.



Upcoming Events

- Self paced courses: Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals and Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers.
- **Webinar**: Rutgers University offering Perinatal Oral Health ECHO Series webinar. Check out the list of series here.
- **Event: 2026 Conference on Oral Health** will be **Friday, November 13** at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. Click here for information.



We wanted to share our appreciation again for our 2026 Conference on Oral Health Sponsors. With your support we can bring an inspiring event to individuals working together to improve the oral health for all Kansans.



Thank you to each of you!

- Delta Dental of Kansas
- Health Forward Foundation
- United Healthcare Community Plan
- Healthy Blue
- REACH Healthcare Foundation
- Wichita State University Speech Language Hearing Clinic



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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