



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.**



Improved Medicaid Dental Rates Support Patient Access and Provider Sustainability

We're gearing up for the 2026 legislative year and preparing our work for another Medicaid dental rate increase. But we need your help! The 2025 rate increase, while historic, still does not cover the significant costs of running a dental office. To ensure Medicaid dental rates are competitive with commercial rates,

Oral Health Kansas and partners are advocating for the Legislature to complete the job this upcoming legislative session.

Stay involved with the issue and share the importance with legislators, colleagues, on your social media or simply [signing on with your organization's name](#) to join the advocacy coalition. Together, we can strengthen the dental provider network and make sure Kansans with Medicaid coverage have access to the dental care they need. Your voice matters more than ever to help the Legislature understand why a further increase in the rates is needed to maintain and improve the dental provider network.



Why Join the Dental Provider Advisory Group?

Not only join, but **WHAT** is the Dental Provider Advisory Group. In 2024, we created the Dental Provider Advisory Group as a forum for the dental provider community. We formed the group in order to authentically represent the challenges dental providers have in public health, especially Medicaid. The group consists of dentists and dental hygienists. We are hopeful we can keep trying to recruit providers from rural and urban areas. Members meet every three months virtually on Zoom. There's a \$100 stipend for participation. Start your year off right by joining the Dental Provider Advisory Group! Fill out the short form [here](#) and we'll contact you with more information.

If you're curious or need more details, email info@oralhealthkansas.org and we'll answer your questions!



Pathways to Oral Health Project: What We Accomplished Together

As we end the year, we look back to see all the accomplishments that the [Pathways to Oral Health Project](#) has seen! It's been a busy year, but an impactful one. We couldn't have done all of this without the help of our Pathways partners and most certainly our funder, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Division of Health Care Finance and ARPA.

We'll continue the work in 2026 through the summer. We are still seeking funding to continue the work through 2026 and beyond. Any suggestions for funders of this important multi-partner initiative would be helpful.

Click [here](#) to see the top activities of the year.



Beyond the Chair: How Dental Providers Can Support Efforts to End the HIV Epidemic

December is HIV/AIDS Awareness Month. People with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), are at special risk for oral health problems. Some of the most common oral health problems for people with HIV/AIDS are chronic dry mouth, gum disease (gingivitis),

bone loss around the teeth (periodontitis), canker sores, oral warts, fever blisters, thrush (oral candidiasis), hairy leukoplakia (which causes a rough, white patch on the tongue), and tooth decay.

Oral health conditions can be painful, annoying, and can lead to other health problems. Combination antiretroviral therapy, which is used to treat HIV and restore immune system function, has made some oral health problems less common.

To help with a dry mouth, try these things:

- Sip water or sugarless drinks often.
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy.
- Avoid tobacco.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid salty foods.
- Use a humidifier at night.

Find more information on the [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research website](#).

On January 28, 2026 from 11:00am CST to 12:00pm CST, participate in a webinar, *Beyond the Chair: How Dental Providers Can Support Efforts to End the HIV Epidemic*, and learn from a qualitative study with dentists and dental hygienists, highlighting their perspectives on HIV knowledge, communication, and coordination. This session will focus on practical strategies that providers can use in everyday practice.

[Register here.](#)



Kansas Mission of Mercy Volunteer Registration is Open

The Kansas Mission of Mercy (KMOM) will be held on January 30 and 31, 2026 in Manhattan at the Kansas National Guard Armory. If you're interested in volunteering, registration is now open! There are different areas that you can be helpful with. You don't have to volunteer both days or all day, just an hour or two would help! Hand out food, walk with patients or if you speak Spanish, you can help interpret!

Oral Health Kansas staff assists with exit surveys after patients are done with their services. If you're interested in helping with exit surveys, let us know and we'll guide you in registering to volunteer. Check out the volunteer registration information [here](#).



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](#).
- Virtual event hosted by Kansas Health Institute, Health on the Plains

Summit, December 11, 10am-1pm CST. Register [here](#).

- Save the date! The 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13.



Last week, OHK's Executive Director, Tanya Dorf Brunner, finished the class she started on September 1. It's part of the Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education program and is called "Public Narrative: Leadership, Storytelling, and Action." The course

included 140 people from 50 countries and was led by [Marshall Ganz](#) who got his start in the Civil Rights Movement in 1964. The course has been a remarkable journey, but Tanya will have more time in her schedule now! This was her third Kennedy School course, so by the end of the month she will have earned a [Nonprofit Leadership Executive Certificate](#) from Harvard. Congratulations, Tanya!



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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