



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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**Weekly
Wednesday
Update.**



Pathways to Oral Health Holds End of the Year Retreat

At the end of its first full year, the Pathways to Oral Health partners stopped to take note of the measurable progress and begin to plan the work ahead. Twenty-one members of the Pathways team from thirteen organizations

attended a retreat on November 21 at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library to reflect on our work to improve the Medicaid dental program and dental care for people with disabilities. Partners celebrated milestones including the redesign of *My Dental Care Passport* and a successful social media and marketing campaign. A new one-stop resource [website](#) was created that now includes a host of educational resources for consumers and providers as well as blogs about a wide range of topics. The Pathways initiative created a video series on adaptive oral care for people with disabilities and provided new provider training programs, including a Project ECHO series, informed by community and dentist input.

The Pathways partners have strengthened collaboration across organizations and created a strong and recognizable brand. A significant policy win was the Medicaid dental rate increase, which reflected strong relationship-building with legislators. Throughout the retreat, the partners celebrated the initiative's growing impact, strong branding, and the unified effort driving its success as we look ahead to the future. A quote we heard from the group that resonated with us is "Pulling the sled together." And that's exactly what we're all doing with this initiative. We couldn't do this work without our partners.

Also, we want to let our facilitators Cy Rogers and Zane May from Wichita State University's Community Engagement Institute know how much we appreciated them. They made the meeting flow so well!



Building a Better Path: How One Mother's Advocacy Sparked Change for Kansas Families

This week's partner spotlight is Stephanie Coleman with LEND, a program at the University of Kansas Medical Center. When Stephanie Coleman's son, Matthew, was diagnosed with autism at age 13, she found herself entering an unfamiliar world without a map. "We were always behind the eight ball," she said. "Every bit of information we got—whether it was about IEPs, waiver services, or college supports—came after the fact."

That sense of always catching up became the driving force behind her lifelong advocacy. Today, Stephanie serves as the Family Discipline Mentor for the Kansas Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Through her work, she helps ensure other families don't have to walk the same confusing road alone.

Read Stephanie's story and the full blog on the Pathways to Oral Health project [website](#).



Online Bulletin Board Provides Resources

During the annual Conference on Oral Health, we provided various resources in real time to our audience through an online bulletin board. We wanted to share with our WWU supporters the resources our "Give and Get Board" had assembled through Padlet, an online bulletin board. Please look through [this report](#)

and utilize what you find valuable!

If there's anything you are hoping to see, email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org.



December is the Month of Giving

December is recognized as the Month of Giving, a time when generosity, compassion, and community spirit shine brightest. We honor the individuals and groups who continually invest in their communities by improving oral health for all. Their actions inspire hope, strengthen relationships, and build a foundation of shared purpose that lasts long after the holiday season. It creates healthier Kansans!

As the year comes to a close, people around the world take this opportunity to reflect, give back, and support meaningful causes. At Oral Health Kansas, we lead with our mission: To improve oral health in Kansas through advocacy, public awareness and education. Our funding is never certain as we are reliant on grant support. Consider making a donation to Oral Health Kansas to support our mission and our work. You can click [here](#) to make a donation.



Webinar: The Importance of Oral Health in Patients with Intellectual or Developmental Disorders

On Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 6:00pm CST, hear from a team of experts on a webinar titled *The Oral Systemic Connection: The Importance of Oral Health in Patients with Intellectual or Developmental Disorders (IDD)*.

Description: As more evidence emerges reinforcing the connections between oral and overall health, effective interprofessional communication and collaboration become crucial for providing the best possible patient care. This ongoing education series delves into the overlap between oral health and overall well-being across various disease states, offering perspectives from a team of expert faculty members.

Learning Objectives:

- Review the necessity of and challenges in delivering oral healthcare to patients with IDD.
- Describe models for successful and consistent outcomes in care in this population.
- Discuss interprofessional communication best practices to provide optimal care for patients with IDD regarding oral and systemic health.

You can register [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](#).

- **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](#).
- Save the date! The 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13.



Missouri Coalition for Oral Health (MCOH) will be welcoming a new Executive Director this month, although it's not a new face! Jessica Emmerich is currently MCOH's Dental Medicaid



Facilitator and will become the Coalition's second Executive Director, succeeding Gary Harbison, who is retiring after 14 years. We're excited to keep working with Jessica who has been a friendly adviser to OHK as we navigate our own work around Medicaid. We also wish Gary well as he enters this new chapter. He has been a close partner to our organization throughout his tenure at the Missouri Coalition for Oral Health. Under his leadership the state established adult dental benefits and a huge Medicaid dental rate increase. We are inspired by the leadership of both Gary and Jessica in Missouri, and we look forward to many more years of partnership.



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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