



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.**

Legislature at the Halfway Mark

Last week marked the mid-point of the 2023 Kansas Legislative Session. At this point nearly all bills that will move forward had to have passed out of their chamber of origin. The House and Senate worked through a combined total of just over 100 bills. Few of the issues Oral Health Kansas is following closely have been resolved, but we do have some updates about some of the issues.



- As we previously reported, **Medicaid coverage of dentures** has been recommended by both the House and Senate budget committees. The House is recommending the full amount needed, which is \$1.7 million. The Senate is recommending less at \$1.2 million. The final amount will be worked out in a conference committee later this month. Stay tuned for possible advocacy alerts to contact your legislators about the

Medicaid denture funding.

- The **Get the Lead Out of School Drinking Water Act** bill will not move forward this year, but the stakeholders involved in it, including Oral Health Kansas, are committed to working on it over the next year with the hope it can pass in 2024.
- **Dolly Parton Imagination Library** bills passed out of both the House and Senate. Oral Health Kansas supports this legislation, which would help expand the program statewide. We are excited about the future and the opportunity to refer families to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library across the state as the Brush Book Bed program expands.
- **SB 6** is a bill that would prohibit the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Secretary as well as local public health officials from issuing orders to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Oral Health Kansas, along with many other public health organizations, opposed the legislation. It passed out of the Senate and will be sent to the House for their consideration.
- The issue of **food sales tax** is still a major topic of debate. Last year the Legislature passed a bill that will eliminate all sales tax on food by 2025. There are bills to eliminate the tax sooner, add provisions related to healthy foods, exempt personal hygiene items, and allow local government to also cut food taxes. It is likely some kind of change in the food sales tax will pass this year, but it probably will not be resolved until the end of the session in late April/early May.

Helpful resources

- Oral Health Kansas' [denture advocacy webpage](#) includes the list of organizations supporting extending adult dental coverage to include dentures, as well as an issue overview and fact sheet.
- Copies of all the [testimony](#) Oral Health Kansas provides to legislative committees can be found on our website.
- Oral Health Kansas' legislative [advocacy toolkit](#) is available on our website. It focuses on the Kansas legislative process and best practices in advocacy.

The 2023 Oral Health Kansas [public policy priorities](#) focus on access to providers, access to a payment source, and public dental health.



Picture courtesy of Wikipedia

March Begins Women's History Month

As Black History Month comes to a close and Women's History Month begins, we want to highlight the need for a representative dental healthcare workforce in Kansas and beyond by honoring Dr. Ida Gray Nelson Rollins.

In 1890, upon graduating with a Doctorate of Dental Surgery from the University of Michigan, Dr. Rollins became the first African-American woman dentist in the United States. She continued to break down barriers throughout her career, going on to be the first African-American woman to open a dental practice in both Cincinnati and Chicago. Her intersecting social identity created unique challenges but, by joining the profession, Dr. Rollins paved the way for increasing public representation in the dental field. However, over 130 years later, disparities in dental workforce diversity still exist today.

Research shows that a more representative dental workforce can significantly reduce barriers to dental healthcare access, increase healthcare utilization and improve health outcomes for underserved populations.

The statistics tell an interesting story:

- In the US, the dental workforce is 69.5% male and 72.3% White, non-Hispanic- however, this is becoming increasingly diverse over time.
- The greatest proportion of male dentists (20.5%) work in the Midwest region. The racial composition of the dental workforce does not represent the population. For example, in 2020, 12.4% of the US population identified as being Black, however, only 3.8% of the dental workforce were Black and 18.4% of the population identified as Hispanic yet only 5.9% of the dental workforce were Hispanic.
- Additionally, Black and Hispanic providers are more likely to participate in Medicaid and CHIP compared to White providers- 63% of Black providers and 51% of Hispanic providers participated in Medicaid or CHIP compared to 39% of White providers.

Sources: Oral Health Workforce Resource Center and American Dental Association Health Policy Institute



Update Your Address with Medicaid Now

As Oral Health Kansas has reported several times over the last few months, continuous eligibility for Medicaid will come to an end starting on April 1, 2023. When the Covid pandemic began, the federal government required states to keep all people enrolled in Medicaid on the insurance program. Since the Covid public health emergency is ending, this continuous eligibility is also ending.

Starting in April people's financial eligibility for Medicaid will be reviewed. Each month between 10,000 and 36,000 individuals will have their eligibility reviewed. It is important that Kansas Medicaid officials be able to contact all Medicaid beneficiaries. If people cannot be contacted they risk losing their Medicaid coverage.

Take action now!

1. Encourage all people who are enrolled in Medicaid to update their mailing address and contact information now at kancare.ks.gov. Here is a [short video](#) about how to use the KIERA app on the KanCare website to update contact information.
2. Check for mail from KanCare and respond on time!
3. If ineligible for KanCare, connect with a [Cover Kansas Navigator](#) to find possible coverage options.

This [short video](#) shares the importance of Medicaid beneficiaries updating their addresses right away!



Grab a Book for Read Across America Day

March 2 is National Read Across America Day. The day was established by the National Education Association in 1998 to help get kids excited about reading. The day occurs each year on the birthday of beloved children's book author Dr.

Seuss! As part of the Brush Book Bed program, we encourage families to create a nightly

routine with their children to brush their teeth, read a book and go to bed. Reading a book together fosters togetherness. Whether you read a book together or alone, take some time to read!

To learn more about the Brush Book Bed program, go to our website:

<http://www.oralhealthkansas.org/BrushBookBed.html>.



Upcoming Events

- **Sign & Share Families USA's Petition [Medicaid Should Cover our Whole Bodies: Mouths Included!](#)**
- **Missouri Oral Health Policy Conference**, March 2 and 3. Learn more [here](#).
- **Kansas Mission of Mercy**, March 24 and 25 in Topeka. Click [here](#) for more information.
- **2023 National Oral Health Conference**, April 17 - 19. Click [here](#) to register.



Last week the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition met for the first time this year. We welcomed new

members, shared updates on the Brush Book Bed program in the Shawnee County area, and had a legislative update. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition or want to learn more, email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org.





Sugary Drink Display

We have Adult and Children's Sugary Drink Displays available for reservations. 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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