



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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Join the Oral Health Kansas Team

Oral Health Kansas (OHK) is searching for the next person to lead our organization. Tanya Dorf Brunner, Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, has announced she will be stepping down from her role to serve as Executive Director of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC), a national organization that supports and strengthens state oral health coalitions across the country. We're excited for Tanya's next adventure!

The OHK Executive Director will lead the organization and advance its mission to improve oral health statewide through advocacy, systems change, and coalition building. The role requires a mission driven, collaborative leader who can turn vision into results while sustaining an inclusive culture. This person will build and take care of strong relationships with lawmakers, funders, and community partners, support the OHK team, and help the organization grow across the state in a steady, long-lasting way. The position offers flexible remote work within Kansas, with optional Topeka office use and occasional in person meetings, events, and legislative engagement.

This position is full time and offers flexible remote work within Kansas, with optional Topeka office use and occasional in-person meetings, events, and legislative engagement. Those interested in applying can access the full job description and requirements, as well as [apply here](#).

If you have any questions about the position, please call HR Partners (785) 233-7860.



Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, a time to promote inclusion, understanding, and support for people with developmental disabilities. It's also an opportunity to highlight an often-overlooked issue: oral health.

People with developmental disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, and cerebral palsy, may face unique challenges in maintaining good oral hygiene. These can include difficulty with daily brushing and flossing, sensory sensitivities, limited access to specialized dental care, or medications that affect oral health.

Good oral health is essential to overall well-being. Untreated dental issues can lead to pain, infection, difficulty eating, and even impact speech and self-esteem. Regular dental visits, proper hygiene routines, and caregiver support play a key role in prevention.

During this month, communities and healthcare providers are encouraged to:

- Raise awareness about oral health disparities
- Promote accessible and inclusive dental care
- Support caregivers with education and resources
- Encourage routine dental checkups

On the Pathways to Oral Health website, we have several resources to help families with their loved one's dental care. For individuals who resist toothbrushing, we have a [handout with tips](#) on how to help. We also have [resources for adaptive aids](#) to help with toothbrushing. Find some [Practical Oral Care for people with Cerebral Palsy as well](#). We also have resources for dentists to help families.



Fluoride Supplements: Evidence, Guidance, and Safety

Join CareQuest Institute for Oral Health and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry for a webinar this Thursday, March 26 that will review the current evidence supporting fluoride supplements as a safe and effective tool for caries prevention.

Through case examples and practical discussion, the expert speakers will examine clinical indications for fluoride supplementation, common access barriers, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration between dental and medical providers. They'll also share strategies and communication tools to confidently address patient and caregiver questions and concerns related to fluoride supplements.

You can earn up to 1 CE credit. Register [here](#).



Lived Experience Advisory Group Member Speaks to Hygiene Students

Education Coordinator, Abby Richwine and Lived Experience Advisory Member, Melanie Jacobs, spoke to a group of dental hygiene students at Wichita State University last Friday. Abby shared oral health resources such as the [My Dental Care Passport](#) and [Sensory Friendly Modifications](#) you can use in your dental office. Melanie shared her family experiences trying to find dental care for her daughter who has cerebral palsy. She spoke of the struggles, the numerous phone calls she's had to make to find a dentist that not only takes Medicaid but also someone that would see a patient with a disability. Her daughter has made great strides and is now able to have a dental visit in a dental office and not a hospital setting. Having students hear this story firsthand puts in perspective that they can truly make a difference in their patients' lives.

Members of our Lived Experience Advisory Group have been giving presentations for dental and dental hygiene students across the state over the past year. We are hopeful we can continue to reach dental and dental hygiene students to bring awareness to what they can do as they're preparing to enter their professions.



National Reading Month

March is National Reading Month, but if you're like many of us, you don't need just one month out of the year to enjoy a good book. National Reading Month

was designed to encourage children and adults to read every day and celebrate the joys and benefits that reading has. We also know that if we model reading a book, our children will follow and also enjoy reading. Reading fosters imagination and language development. Spending time reading with your children or reading out loud as a family generates closeness and strengthens family bonds. Reading at bedtime also helps calm children down and helps them go to bed with positive thoughts.

The [Brush Book Bed](#) model not only helps create storytelling time, but it also helps with bedtime routines. You brush your teeth together, read a book and then go to bed at the same time each night. Try to give yourself enough time to do this routine. Children learn better when they're on a routine and soon enough, they'll be asking you to get ready for bed so they can read a book with you and spend time together winding down.



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:** Fluoride Supplements: Evidence, Guidance, and Safety on March 26 from 6:00pm-7:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- Dental Clinic Leadership Conference co-hosted by Community Care Network of Kansas and the Health Center Association of Nebraska on April 9 - April 10 in Manhattan. Learn more [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Prevention First – Better Oral Health for All on April 6 from 7:00pm-8:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- Save the date! The 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards Campus.



The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition met at the county health department office last week and learned about all the services they provide, including how the home visiting program uses the Brush Book Bed model to help families adopt healthy bedtime routines. The Coalition has been meeting at the offices of each of the coalition members to learn more about what each organization does.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Shawnee County Health Department

If you're in Shawnee County and want to join the coalition, email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org. The group meetings for one hour over the lunch hour, 12:00pm-1:00pm every other month.



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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