



## 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

Come join our team! We're looking for a full time Executive Director to lead Oral Health Kansas and advance our mission to improve oral health statewide through advocacy, systems change, and coalition building. The role calls for someone who cares deeply about the purpose, works well with others, can turn ideas into real results, and helps create a welcoming and supportive environment for everyone. The Executive Director will steward strong legislative, funder, and community partnerships, support staff, and guide sustainable statewide growth. Although this position offers

flexible remote work, the individual must also be flexible understanding that circumstances and deadlines change quite often! The position provides optional Topeka office use and occasional in-person meetings, events, and legislative engagement as well as managing organizational operations, budgets, and staff.

Those interested in applying can access the full job description as well as [apply here](#). To apply, you will also need to include a Cover Letter, Resume, and a professional writing sample. The sample can be a strategic presentation, published article, policy brief, grant proposal, media release, or similar work that reflects your leadership and communication style.

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



## One More Step to Secure Rate Increase

Last week the Legislature reached “First Adjournment,” which is the end of the session. They will return on April 9 for a brief wrap-up session to consider outstanding issues such as property tax relief, as well as to consider overturning any vetoes Governor Kelly issues.

When the Legislature adjourned last week they passed the state budget, which includes \$2M in state general funds for a Medicaid dental rate increase. With the federal matching funds, the rate increase should be about \$5M. While the increase is not as much as we had hoped for, it is meaningful, especially in a year in which budget cuts were far more common than budget additions. It is clear that the years of advocacy to improve the Kansas Medicaid dental program are paying off. Dozens of advocates joined us this year in reaching out to legislators and providing testimony. We are grateful for everyone’s support.

The final step for the rate increase is Governor Kelly’s approval. She will review the budget bill in the coming days. Oral Health Kansas and the Kansas Dental Association will work with the Medicaid Director on implementation of the increase to ensure it has a meaningful impact on rates like the increase last year. We will share additional details as we know more. For now, we look forward to the chance to celebrate another successful bid for a Medicaid dental rate increase.

## Guest Speakers Join Oral Health Kansas Board Meeting

Oral Health Kansas (OHK) board members held their first in person meeting of the year at the Kansas Health Institute in Topeka. Board member Linda Sheppard and KHI staff, hosted the meeting and the hospitality was amazing! During the meeting, we had two guest speakers. Veronica Byrd, Co-Chair for the



Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition and former OHK board member, shared about the coalition and how it first came into fruition. The coalition has been going strong since 2015! Members include Sheldon Head Start, AllWays Community Health Center, GraceMed Health Clinic, YMCA Early Learning Center, Parents as Teachers USD437 and community volunteers. If you're interested in learning more or joining, email us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).

The next guest was Blake Harris, nurse at the Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI) and Trisha Martin, Director of Training and Staff Development. Blake provided a history of KNI as well as the strategies they are taking to ensure oral health is in each resident's check list. KNI residents and staff assisted us with the award winning video series, [Confidence in Every Smile](#). The series was designed to make brushing and flossing easier for people living with physical or intellectual disabilities.

We look forward to continuing to work with KNI and sharing the importance of oral health awareness to their staff and residents.



## Medicaid Awareness Month

April is Medicaid Awareness Month. dedicated to highlighting the crucial role Medicaid plays in providing health coverage to over 80 million Americans, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities. In Kansas, Medicaid is known as KanCare, the State of

Kansas' managed care program. Since 2013, Kansas has contracted with three health plans, or managed care organizations (MCOs), to coordinate health care for nearly all beneficiaries. The three health insurance companies are Healthy Blue, Sunflower Health Plan and United Healthcare. KanCare covers dental care for both kids and adults including cleanings, fillings and extractions. You can visit the Pathways to Oral Health website to learn more and read [Understanding Your KanCare Dental Benefits](#). Each Managed Care Organization has Value Added Benefits, which are extra benefits you can receive with KanCare. Click [here](#) to view all the value added benefits offered.



## National Autism Acceptance Month

National Autism Acceptance Month is observed every April and focuses on promoting understanding, inclusion, and respect for people on the autism spectrum, shifting the conversation from just "awareness" to genuine acceptance and support. Earlier efforts often emphasized "awareness," but many advocates, especially within the autistic community push for acceptance, which goes further:

- Awareness is knowing autism exists
- Acceptance is creating environments where autistic people can thrive without needing to mask who they are

In the dental office, you can create acceptance with your staff by adopting modifications that can help an individual with a disability. [Sensory Friendly Modifications](#) is a document that provides ideas for modifications or products that you can use in your dental office. Some are low cost or no cost and easily manageable. You can also read the [full blog](#) about Sensory Friendly Modifications to help you find out what can work for your office.

Another helpful tool is [Behavior Speaks](#). This tip sheet provides guidance for identifying concerns in individuals with disabilities. Keep in mind that some individuals may have difficulty communicating what is troubling them. The [My Dental Care Passport](#) is a tool that can assist in many ways and help you prepare for the dental visit ahead of time. Providing this to a patient to fill out and submit before the dental appointment, allows you time to create a sensory friendly environment.



## 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](#).
- 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.



We were excited to welcome new board members, Jill Jenkins, DDS and Shane Lewis to their first OHK board meeting. Both members have already provided excellent feedback. They are a wonderful addition to the group, and we look forward to continuing to learn from them.





## 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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