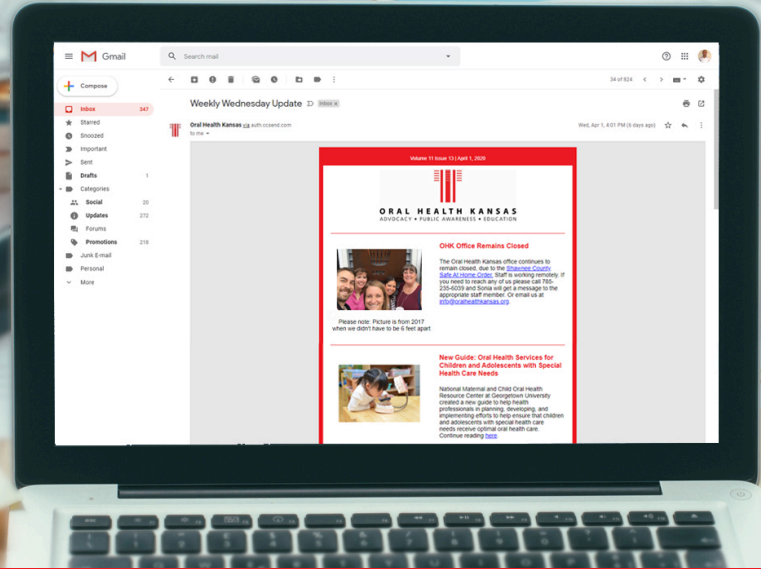




ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



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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Scan the QR code



or click here to sign up for our [Weekly Wednesday Update](#).



Picture courtesy of KCDD

Announcing 2026 Conference on Oral Health Keynote Speaker

We're excited to announce Whit Downing has agreed to be our Keynote Speaker this year at our annual Conference on Oral Health. Whit is the Vice President of Policy and Programming for the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities, the leading statewide organization representing Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and a Pathways to Oral Health Project partner. Participants will hear from Whit

as she shares her experiences as a person with a disability and how she's navigated systems and services, including dental services.

The Conference on Oral Health will be held Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. Watch our Weekly Wednesday Update for our registration launch this summer. If you're interested in exhibiting or sponsoring our event, email Sonia at solmos@oralhealthkansas.org.



OHK Staff Visit with Dental Students

Education Coordinator, Abby Richwine, exhibited the Pathways to Oral Health Project and Oral Health Kansas (OHK) resources at the UMKC Midwest Dental Conference, which was attended by over 500 dental providers and dental students. There was strong engagement at the booth, with many discussions focused on the Pathways to Oral Health Project, adaptive aides, and the Confidence in Every Smile video. Attendees also showed interest in Medicaid rate increases and educational resources to help providers better serve individuals with disabilities.

The event provided good opportunities to build connections and distribute resources. Several attendees shared that they had visited the booth in previous years and are now actively using OHK resources or referring patients to them, demonstrating growing awareness and impact of the program.

If you have any questions, email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org.



Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition Visit with Families in the Community

The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition attended "Roll and Read" in Topeka on Saturday, April 25. The event is hosted by Parents as Teachers. Co-Chair, Kate Hamilton, visited with around 100 families about oral health and the importance of beginning good oral hygiene at a young age. Families shared their own personal dental stories and walked away with resources to use at home.

The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition will be at "Safe Kids Day at the Zoo" on Saturday, May 2 in Topeka. Stop by the table to receive resources, giveaways and find out how to be a part of the coalition.

Are you interested in joining the Coalition? The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition meets every other month from 12:00pm -1:00pm. The meetings may be virtual or in person. The focus of the coalition is

sharing the Brush Book Bed model with families and the Topeka community. Brush Book Bed is a program of the American Academy of Pediatrics and recommends this simple ritual at the end of the day:

1. Each night, help your children to brush their teeth.
2. Read a favorite book.
3. Get to bed at a regular time each night.

For more information, email info@oralhealthkansas.org.



Mental Health Awareness Month

Is April really almost over? As we head into May, we're ready to recognize Mental Health Awareness Month and reflect on how deeply our mental and physical health are connected.

Our mental health affects the entire body, just like our oral health does. When we're struggling with conditions like depression or anxiety disorder, even simple daily habits can feel overwhelming. Things like brushing and flossing may get skipped, and dental visits are often delayed or avoided altogether.

Over time, this can increase the risk of dental caries, persistent bad breath, and periodontal disease. These oral health challenges don't just affect our teeth, they can also impact how we feel about ourselves. Changes in our smile or ongoing discomfort can lower confidence and self-esteem.

For some, dental issues may even lead to social withdrawal, which can further worsen feelings of depression or anxiety. It's a powerful reminder that caring for our mental health and oral health together isn't just important, it's essential.

What are some ways to help individuals who may be struggling with their mental health?

- Meet them where they are. If they have anxiety, what are they anxious about in the dental office?
- Help set small daily routines, such as brushing teeth, then move on to flossing daily.
- Avoid sugary foods and beverages. Chewing sugar free gum can help pull food stuck in your teeth.
- Stay hydrated! Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Find more resources on our Tips and Tricks [webpage](#).

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](#).
- Kansas Public Health Association Conference, October 5 - 6, 2026 in Manhattan. Click [here](#) for information.
- Rutgers University offering Perinatal Oral Health ECHO Series. Check out the list of series [here](#).
- Save the date! The 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards Campus.



OHK staff are pretty amazing, and we enjoy highlighting accomplishments outside of work. A big applause for Monica Turner, Project Coordinator, for completing a half marathon in Nashville this past weekend.



Read what Monica had to say about the event:

Running half-marathons over the years has been my way of not only staying in shape, but proving to myself that with consistency, hard work, and discipline, you can accomplish anything. In past races, I always focused on running as fast as I could to achieve my best time. This year was different. My daughter invited me to run with her in the St. Jude's Nashville Rock'n' Roll half marathon, and how could I say no? It turned out to be the most fun race I've ever participated in - running side by side with one of my favorite people in the world!

Congratulations, Monica! You bring this hard work to OHK every day and we appreciate it.



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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