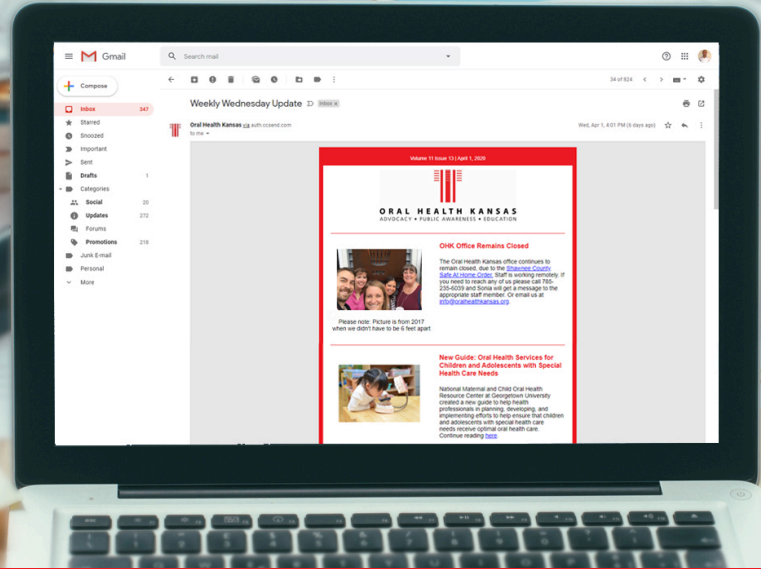




ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



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](#).

May 6, 2026

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Scan the QR code



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



Executive Director Wins Visionary Leadership Award

We're excited to announce Executive Director, Tanya Dorf Brunner, won [American Institute on Disparities in Public Health's](#) (AIDPH) Visionary Leadership Award. AIDPH is a national organization dedicated to eliminating health disparities through research, education, and advocacy. Founded in 2015, it advocates for an equitable, accessible, and integrated oral health system that supports underserved populations,

including veterans, rural communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities.

Tanya's work spearheading the Pathways to Oral Health project to improve dental care access for people with disabilities was recognized with this honor. AIDPH's Visionary Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in advancing a justice-oriented oral and public health system. Tanya was selected for her clear and sustained commitment to advancing equity and justice, her ability to lead meaningful change, and the impact of her work across research, policy, and practice. Tanya's leadership reflects both innovation and a strong collaborative approach by bringing people together to move the field forward in tangible ways.

The Visionary Leadership Award will be given during AIDPH's 2026 Colloquium next week. Thank you, Tanya for your hard work for Kansans and OHK staff!



Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition Seeks Volunteers

The Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition visited with dozens of families during Safe Kids Day at the Zoo on Saturday, May 3. Over 1,500 people attended! This event allowed coalition Co-Chair, Kate Hamilton, to meet with families and talk about the importance of their oral care.

The Coalition is looking for volunteers to help with events such as these. If you can help out for one hour or more,

that would be great! You don't need to be an oral health expert, but you will definitely learn a lot being at these exhibits. You can hand out resources, show families the Sugary Drink Display and help take pictures at these events. This is a good opportunity for students or anyone who needs volunteer hours. You can email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org if you want to learn more.

If your organization is in the Shawnee County area and is interested in joining the Oral Health Coalition, email us at info@oralhealthkansas.org. They meet every other month over the noon hour.

National School Nurses Day

National School Nurses Day is today, May 6, and National Nurses Week is May 6-12 each year. School nurses play a vital role in the health of our children while in school. Poor oral health can affect children throughout the school day. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), students miss an average of more than 34 million school hours each year because of acute/unplanned dental care. Cavities or tooth decay are the most common chronic disease of childhood in the United States. Nurses can work



with families to connect them to a dentist or community clinics. They provide resources for families to help them with the care they need.

Thank you to Andrea Ferrel, nurse and Health Coordinator for Sheldon Head Start in Topeka. Andrea is also a member of the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition. She is already taking steps integrating oral health into health services for children at an early age!



Older Americans Month

May is Older Americans Month. The [*Older Americans 2012 report Key Indicators of Well Being*](#), states that by the year 2030, the number of U.S. adults 65 years or older will reach 72 million, representing nearly 20% of the total U.S. population. Older adults are a growing patient demographic for dental practices. Although around 5% of adults older than 65 years don't have teeth or do not have their natural teeth, an increased

numbers of older adults are retaining their natural teeth.

Older adults frequently have dental conditions such as dry mouth that can be caused by medications or impairments that make it hard for them to brush their own teeth. They also face barriers to seeking dental care because of lack of insurance or transportation. With these cases, it's important for older adults to receive the care they need. Good oral health helps older adults stay comfortable, nourished, and socially engaged.

There are resources that can help with mobility challenges. [Resources for Adaptive Aids](#) provides tools that can help with toothbrushing if the individual is not able to hold a toothbrush as well. [Brushing the Teeth of Others](#) is a helpful video for caregivers who assist a loved one with toothbrushing. Visit the [Pathways to Oral Health Project website](#) for more helpful videos and resources!



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.
- **Webinar:** 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.



Lived Experience Advisory Member and Pathways to Oral Health Project partner, Stephanie Coleman, was the Keynote Speaker for the Autism Resource Center of Kansas City 2026 Summit last month. Stephanie is an



Autism Family Educator for the division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of Kansas Medical Center and Kansas LEND Family Faculty mentoring and supporting family trainees as they grow their leadership and advocacy skills. She's a fierce mom advocate for her son Matthew who is on the autism spectrum.



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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