



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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Create an Impactful Event and Help Support the Conference on Oral Health

As a sponsor or exhibitor, you'll have the opportunity to connect with oral health professionals, healthcare providers, advocates, policymakers, educators, and community leaders from across Kansas. This year's conference features an inspiring keynote presentation by Whit Downing, Vice President of Policy and Programming at the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities, who will share her compelling lived experience journey. Attendees will also hear from Stuart Little of Little Government Relations, who will provide an insightful look at the

results of the 2026 election, evolving political landscape, emerging policy priorities, and what the 2027 legislative session could mean for oral health in Kansas. These are just a couple of the intriguing topics you will hear!

Through expanded networking opportunities and engaging discussions, participants will gain new ideas, practical strategies, and valuable connections to help improve the overall health and oral health of Kansans. Your sponsorship helps make these important conversations possible while showcasing your organization's commitment to healthier communities across the state.

The all-day conference will be on Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards campus in Overland Park. If you're interested in sponsoring or exhibiting, find more information [here](#).



Autistic Pride Day

Autistic Pride Day is a global movement led by Autistic people, celebrating identity, strengths and community. This day is about visibility, not permission. Pride, not pity. First marked in 2005 by Autistic-led group Aspies for Freedom, Autistic Pride Day challenges the outdated idea that Autism is something to be “fixed” or “cured.” Instead, we celebrate Autism as a natural and valuable part of human diversity.

Individuals with autism may experience unique challenges related to oral health and accessing dental care. Sensory sensitivities, communication differences, anxiety, and difficulty with changes in routine can make daily oral hygiene and dental visits more challenging. For some, it is also the inability to relate social-emotionally as in trust, approval, and interest in another person. There are several types of conditions that people with autism may have that can interfere with dental care. One is the inability to communicate needs either verbally or nonverbally. It may be difficult to respond to questions or ask for help. Some people with autism have repetitive speech or motions like tapping fingers.

Dental offices can make adaptations in their office and during the dental visit to make it more accommodating. Here are some ways you can accommodate: The sounds of dental tools, bright lights, and the feeling of someone working inside your mouth can trigger anxiety. Consider strategies like providing noise-canceling headphones. Encourage patients to communicate their fears and concerns. The [My Dental Care Passport](#) is a simple tool that individuals can fill out before the appointment and share their concerns, behaviors or anything about themselves that would be helpful. Filling this out before the appointment prepares the dental provider ahead of time for the situation.

On the Oral Health Kansas website, we have several resources for people on the autism spectrum, including techniques to help with toothbrushing. You can find that information on this [webpage](#). You can also find some helpful resources on the Pathways to Oral Health [website](#).



Celebrating Juneteenth

Juneteenth, celebrated on June 19th, commemorates the emancipation of the last enslaved African Americans in the United States in 1865. It is a powerful moment of reflection, celebration, and continued advocacy for equity, including in healthcare. Oral Health Kansas believes in reducing disparities and achieving greater health equity in every part of the state by disrupting systems of poverty. Community conditions can create unequal opportunities, choices, and access to resources that allow people to live healthy lives. We focus on social determinants and how communities can alter the ways that structural drivers affect daily living conditions, providing the opportunity to improve health while reducing inequities. Black Americans have historically experienced barriers to dental care, including lack of access to affordable care, and limited availability of Black dental providers. These factors contribute to higher rates of untreated tooth decay, periodontal disease, and oral cancers in Black communities.

Let this Juneteenth serve not only as a remembrance of freedom delayed but also as a reminder of the persistent disparities and the work still ahead. By advancing oral health education, access, and equity in Black communities, we take meaningful steps toward justice, not just in words, but in care. The path to equity is ongoing, and it begins with acknowledging the past, addressing present barriers, and building a healthier, more inclusive future for all.



New Veterans Oral Health Course at Smiles for Life

[Smiles for Life](#) is a national oral health curriculum designed to help healthcare professionals integrate oral health into primary care. The program provides free, evidence-based education on topics such as oral disease prevention, risk assessment, and fluoride use, and the connection between oral health and overall health, helping providers improve patient care across the lifespan.

A new Veterans Oral Health module is now available on Smiles for Life. In this course you'll learn 56% of veterans had above-average caries experience, compared with 37% of nonveterans. It is available here complete with speaker notes: <https://www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.org/teach-curriculum/course-veterans-oral-health/>. You can also find other [online courses on the Smiles for Life website](#).



Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month raises awareness about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia while highlighting the importance of brain health. More than memory loss, Alzheimer's affects thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform everyday activities. Maintaining good oral health is also important, as emerging research continues to explore the connection between oral health, inflammation, and

cognitive health. This month serves as a reminder to support those affected by Alzheimer's, promote early detection, and encourage habits that contribute to lifelong brain health.

If your loved one has Alzheimer's and is uncomfortable brushing their teeth or accepting help with oral care, know that this is a common challenge. Patience, gentle encouragement, and adapting the routine to their needs can help make oral care more comfortable and successful. [When a Person Resists Toothbrushing](#) tips sheet, has helpful suggestions to help your loved one. The award winning [Confidence in Every Smile](#) video series demonstrates ways and provides techniques to help with toothbrushing. Although the series are tips to assist individuals with a disability, these are helpful for all individuals that may need help with toothbrushing.

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



Upcoming Events

- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- Community Care Network of Kansas annual conference, September 23-25 in Manhattan, Kansas. Learn more [here](#).
- Kansas Public Health Association Conference, October 5 - 6, 2026 in Manhattan. Click [here](#) for information.
- Rutgers University offering Perinatal Oral Health ECHO Series webinar. 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.



Thank you to the three Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs): Healthy Blue, Sunflower Health Plan and United Healthcare, for presenting this week on the Medicaid Value Added Benefits (VABs): What You Need to Know

webinar. This information is helpful to understand what members are eligible for.

Save the date for the next webinar, Behind the Curtain on Tuesday, August 11 from 12:00pm-12:30pm



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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