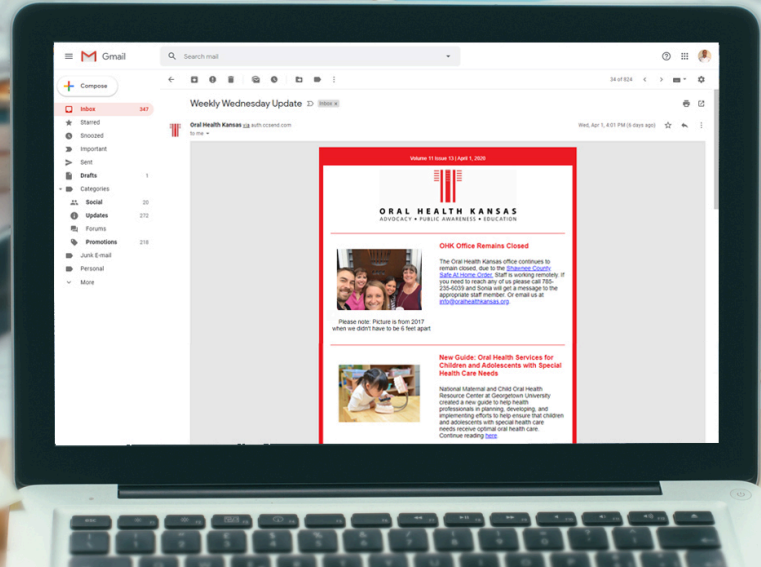




WEEKLY WEDNESDAY UPDATE

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](#).

September 16, 2026

Volume 17, Issue 36

Scan the QR code



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Wednesday
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Registration is Open! Get Your Seat!

The Conference on Oral Health registration officially opened last week. Thank you to those early birds who have already registered! Get your seat before the next bird takes it! The conference will be at KU Edwards Campus (ironically, a bird location) in Overland Park on the luckiest day of the year, Friday, November 13. We'll open the day

at 7:30 so you can come grab breakfast and visit with exhibitors. The first session starts at 8:30am and we'll call it a day at 4:00pm.

We'll have plenary and breakout sessions. You'll have several chances for networking and opportunities to hear what others are doing in Kansas.

(schedule is subject to change)

Oral Health Policy and Election Update

Speakers: Dr. Stuart Little, PhD, Little Government Relations

Enhancing Patient-Centered Care with the My Dental Care Passport & Sensory Modifications Guide

Speakers: Dr. MaryAnne Lynch Small, MPH, BDS, Oral Health Kansas; Abby Richwine, RDH, BS, Oral Health Kansas; Deb Pochop, Northwest Smile Center; Billie Donohue, CDA, Rogers Family Dentistry; Shelley Howard, RDH, BS DH, MHSA, UMKC School of Dentistry

Resilience, Well-Being, and Success in the Workplace

Speaker: Jody J. Fiorini, PhD, LCPC-S, NCC, ACS, Professor of Counseling

Coordinator of the PhD in Education & Behavioral Studies - Clinical Counselor Education & Supervision track, Intervention Services & Leadership in Education (ISLE)

Building Your Advocacy Skills

Speakers: Little Government Relations

The State of Dental Practice: Costs, Insurance, and Access

Speakers: Deesha Bhaumik, PhD, MS American Dental Association Health Policy Institute

How to register: Click on [this link](#) to register. If you do not have an account with the IRIS conference platform, you will need to set up an account.

Regular Attendee Rate: \$125 | Walk-in Attendee Rate: \$150

Regular Student Rate: \$20 | Walk-in Student Rate: \$25

Rates include access to all meals, snacks and sessions.

If you have any questions, email Sonia at solmos@oralhealthkansas.org.

We have a hotel block at the Courtyard by Marriott Olathe at 12151 S. Strang Line Court. Details coming soon.



Pathways to Oral Health Project Makes an Impact

The [Pathways to Oral Health Project](#) and partners are a collaborative initiative between the dental and disabilities communities in Kansas, dedicated to improving access to dental care and expanding education on oral health for individuals with developmental disabilities (IDD) who rely on KanCare. This past year has been a success, but we still have work to do. In the meantime, read about our celebrations!

- **Project ECHO: Accessible Oral Health:** 2025 expanded professional knowledge and skills related to accessible oral health care, reaching **173 registrants** and 87 unique learners through five sessions, with 100% reporting increased helpful knowledge and 94% reporting skills they could apply to improve professional practice.
- **Feeling Good About Your Smile:** Delivered 14 Feeling Good About Your Smiles sessions to 150 participants across seven Kansas counties, with many sessions taking place in rural communities.
- **Lived Experience Presentations**-Integrated lived experience into dental education.
 - Individuals with lived experience shared their perspectives with students at **five dental hygiene schools**.
 - Reaching more than **176** future dental professionals.
 - Built understanding of patient experiences.
- **Developed award-winning educational videos**â€œ: [Confidence in Every Smile](#) and [Brushing the Teeth of Others](#).

We continue to guide dental providers with questions about enrolling as a Medicaid provider or respond to current Medicaid provider questions. We also help consumers who need help [finding a dentist](#). Our work may begin to look a little different but the goal is the same: improve dental care access for the IDD population.

If you have any questions about the project, reach out to us at info@oralhealthkansas.org



September is World Alzheimer's Month

World Alzheimer's Month is observed every September and it raises awareness about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Oral health is a connection that's often overlooked, but it plays a meaningful role at nearly every stage of the disease. Gum disease may be linked to increased dementia risk. Research has explored connections between chronic periodontal disease and cognitive decline, with some studies

suggesting that oral bacteria and inflammation may play a role in Alzheimer's progression but the research is still being worked out!

Alzheimer's makes oral hygiene harder to maintain. As cognitive function declines, individuals may forget to brush or floss, struggle with the physical steps involved, or lose the ability to communicate dental pain or discomfort and can lead to undetected and untreated problems. Poor oral health can worsen other health outcomes for Alzheimer's patients. Untreated dental infections and gum disease can contribute to systemic inflammation and have been associated with faster cognitive decline in some studies, as well as increased risk of aspiration pneumonia in later stages.

For caregivers, helping with daily tasks including brushing the teeth of a loved one can be difficult but there are tips you can use. You can establish a routine and brush their teeth at the same time every day. While brushing, watch for signs that there may be some dental pain. You can also monitor for dental pain while the individual eats.

The award winning video series, [Confidence in Every Smile](#) is designed to make brushing and flossing easier for people living with physical or intellectual disabilities but this can also help some who has Alzheimer's. Each video shares practical tips, creative tools, and encouragement so everyone can care for their teeth with confidence. From handling toothbrushes and toothpaste, to managing gagging or flossing with limited mobility, to brushing comfortably when you can't stand at the sink, these videos help you discover what works best for you. [Brushing the Teeth of Others](#) provides various tips as well on how you can brush the teeth of your loved one.

Check out the [Pathways to Oral Health](#) and [Oral Health Kansas](#) website for more ideas.



Hispanic Heritage Month Begins This Week

As Hispanic Heritage Month begins, it's a meaningful time to recognize both the cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latino communities and the real, persistent disparities they face in oral health care access and outcomes.

Hispanic and Latino people represent the largest and fastest-growing non-majority ethnic group in the United States, making up 18.9% of the population, and the data shows they carry a disproportionate share of the nation's oral disease burden. More Latino children and young adults ages 2-19 have cavities (57%) than their Black (48%), Asian (45%), and White (40%) peers. Additionally, Hispanic children aged 6-11 have the highest prevalence of decayed and filled teeth compared to other children in that age group. National data indicated the prevalence of untreated tooth decay in Hispanic adults aged 20-64 was significantly higher (36%) than in non-Hispanic white adults (22%), and among older adults, 27% of Hispanic adults 65 and older were affected by untreated decay compared to 16% of non-Hispanic white adults. Approximately 15% of Hispanic adults aged 65 and over were edentulous (had no teeth). You can read the full study [here](#).

[Studies show](#), migrant families often face discrimination in healthcare based on their race, socioeconomic status, not speaking English, and insurance status. Language plays a critical role in oral health disparities for Hispanics with limited English proficiency. In households where Spanish was the primary language, research shows that the likelihood of tooth decay was 70% compared to 47% in primarily English-speaking households.

Organizations like the Hispanic Dental Association and CareQuest Institute have called for targeted policy solutions, including expanding dental insurance access, growing a bilingual and culturally competent dental workforce, and investing in community-based outreach in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. Efforts like community oral health promotion centers located directly in high-density Latinx neighborhoods reflect one model for meeting people where they are.



American Dental Association Urges Against Removal of Head Start Oral Health Standards

On August 7, 2026, Reducing Federal Burden for Head Start Programs proposed rule released by the Administration for Children and Families aimed to rescind and replace current Head Start Program Performance Standards with a streamlined framework that cuts federal regulations by over 90% and defers

heavily to state and local policies. The Head Start Program Performance Standards are the foundation on which programs design and deliver services to support the school readiness of children from low-income families.

The American Dental Association (ADA) is urging the federal government to retain Head Start requirements related to oral health, including supervised toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste and provisions designed to help children access dental care. In comments to the Administration for Children and Families, the ADA opposed proposed changes to the Head Start Program Performance Standards that would remove requirements related to child health status and care and oral health practices. According to the letter, the proposed changes would remove standards related to facilitating access to care, providing oral hygiene instruction and supervising daily toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste.

[Read more.](#)



Webinar Series: Supporting Youth with Special Health Care Needs in the Transition to Adult Care

The Kansas Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics is bringing a webinar series focused on Supporting Youth with Special Health Care Needs in the Transition to Adult Care. Stephanie Pratt, LMSW, will be speaking during the first webinar on September 21st. Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities staff and Nan Perrin,

Sunflower Health Plan will be participating in the second webinar on September 28th.

Share this opportunity with your networks who may benefit from learning more about supporting youth and young adults as they transition from pediatric to adult health care. The series will provide practical information, strategies, and resources to help strengthen transition planning and improve outcomes for youth with special health care needs.

Webinar #1: September 21, 2026 | 12:00-1:00 PM

Microsoft Teams

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/271129746190712?p=W8s3ugelC5bsZhBGW3>

Meeting ID: 271 129 746 190 712

Passcode: 2dE2di2V

Webinar #2: September 28, 2026 | 12:00-1:00 PM

Microsoft Teams

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/216569161808331?p=Og6Q6qIQaIPxoMjySD>

Meeting ID: 216 569 161 808 331

Passcode: 5iA74xs7



Upcoming Events

- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- **Webinar:** Rutgers University offering Perinatal Oral Health ECHO Series webinar. Check out the list of series [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Silver Diamine Fluoride in Action: Evidence and

Implementation, hosted by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health on September 17 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).

- **Webinar:** Medicare: Expansion of Dental Services, hosted by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health on October 8 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Next Making Medicaid Work for You webinar series is on October 13 at 12:00pm. Registration information coming soon.
- **Webinar:** Substance Use Disorders and Dentistry, hosted by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health on October 22 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- **Event:** Community Care Network of Kansas annual conference, September 23-25 in Manhattan, Kansas. Learn more [here](#).
- **Event:** Kansas Public Health Association Conference, October 5 - 6, 2026 in Manhattan. Click [here](#) for information.
- **Event:** 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be **Friday, November 13** at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. Click [here](#) for information.

Thank you for our current 2026 Conference on Oral Health sponsors! Your partnership makes a difference bringing oral health awareness to all communities.



If you are interested in sponsoring, click [here](#) to see the sponsorship or exhibitor opportunities. If these options don't fit,

let's talk and see what does. Email Sonia at

solmos@oralhealthkansas.org.



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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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