

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
ISSUE PAPER
by
Bureau of Oral Health

Proposed Statute Changes the Annual Free Dental Inspection Act

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE X BUDGET INITIATIVE _____ POLICY INITIATIVE _____

I. Nature of Initiative

The Kansas Dental School Screening Program is located within the Bureau of Oral Health (BOH). BOH wishes to advance this proposal to make statutory changes in order to enhance the ability to provide oral health in-school screenings affecting school-age children in Kansas. These changes are necessary to increase the number of trained school-based healthcare staff able to perform dental screenings in order to ensure all children in Kansas schools are eligible to receive this service. Due to Covid-19, many school districts have incorporated new protocols which limit student access in schools resulting in a significant decrease in dental screenings performed in the past three years, this initiative would help mitigate the need for outside Dentist and Dental Hygienists, to be the sole providers of dental screening services in Kansas schools.

II. Background

K.S.A. 72-6251, formerly K.S.A. 72-5201 was initially enacted in 1915, with revisions noted in 1919 and 1923. The Act establishes annual free dental inspections in Kansas schools. The Act states the following: “the boards of educations of cities of the first and second class and school boards of school districts are hereby required to provide for free dental inspection annually for all children, except those who hold a certificate from a legally qualified dentist showing that this examination has been made within three months last past, attending such schools.

K.S.A. 72-6252, formerly K.S.A. 72-5202, Inspectors; regulations, states the following: “said boards of education and district boards of each school shall provide a place of inspection and designate some competent, licensed dentist or dentists to make such inspection, and such boards of education and district boards may fix a compensation for such services, which sum may be paid out of the school fund of each school for the services rendered therein, and said boards of education for their respective cities and the county superintendent of public instruction for school districts are hereby authorized to make all necessary rules and regulations for the proper conduct of such inspection and carrying into effect all of the provisions of the preceding sections, and furnish all necessary forms and blanks for the reports of such inspection”.

III. Recommendations

The Kansas Statute amendment is recommended in order to increase dental screening services in schools by modifying who the Board of Education can assign to perform such screenings. The recommendation is that the Act be amended to be consistent with other health related screenings performed in schools such as vision and hearing screenings which allows for trained school healthcare personnel to perform the screening. The results of the screening and, if necessary, a referral to a qualified Dentist shall be reported to the parents or guardian of such students.

Goal: To enhance access to school-based dental screenings by allowing other trained healthcare school personnel, such as school nurses, to perform the screenings instead of only allowing outside Dental

Professionals to perform the task.

IV. Summary of the Proposed Initiative

This initiative proposes to facilitate the ability of children to receive dental screenings in school by allowing for trained school healthcare personnel to perform the screenings instead of only allowing an outside Dental Professional to perform the service. Dental screenings will be able to be performed by the same school personnel that routinely perform vision and hearing screenings.

a. Relevance to mission of KDHE, Division, bureau or program

KDHE’s Mission Statement: To protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans is addressed by this initiative, because school-based oral health screenings are an integral part of improving the oral health of children across the state.

Improving the oral health of all Kansans is a priority for the Bureau of Oral Health and starting with the most vulnerable population, children allows for improved oral health education and development of improved oral health practices throughout the lifespan.

V. Legislative Implications/History

The Annual free dental inspection statute, K.S.A. 72-6251 was enacted in 1915 to provide a free, annual oral health screening for every child enrolled in a Kansas school. K.S.A. 72-6252 outlines who can currently provide that dental screening, Dentists, which routinely are not part of a school’s healthcare team. The sole designation of Dentists being able to perform this screening has become a barrier to children receiving this service since school districts are responsible for the coordination of this service and there’s no funding available to reimburse Dental Professionals for this service, therefore, it’s done on a volunteer basis only.

VI. Feasibility of the Initiative

a. Fiscal Impact

Dental screenings are not a reimbursable service; therefore, Dental Professionals must volunteer their time and their staff’s time in order to provide this service to school districts at no cost. This limits the number of Dentists available to perform in-school dental screenings and for those Dental Professionals that do volunteer their time, it reflects a loss in revenue to their dental offices. This proposed amendment would benefit school-age children by increasing the number of trained school healthcare professionals able to perform the screenings at each school at no cost to the school districts and mitigate the loss of revenue for outside Dental Professionals who are currently volunteering to provide this service.

School year	# of children screened	% screened of total enrollment
2018-2019	160,831	32%
2019-2020	152,568	30%
2020-2021	68,636	14%
2021-2022	141,787	28%

b. Strengths and weaknesses of the initiative

- i. **S:** This initiative will increase the number of children receiving dental screenings in Kansas schools.
- ii. **S:** This initiative will increase the number of school healthcare personnel trained to provide dental screenings to children.
- iii. **S:** This initiative will decrease barrier to care for schools who currently don't have volunteer Dental Professionals available to perform dental screenings.

c. Stakeholder impact

School districts will have additional choices in who is able to perform dental screenings in their schools, therefore, increasing screening opportunities for their students. Dental Professionals will continue to have the option to volunteer in their communities and perform dental screenings, if they so choose to.

VII. Potential Issues & Strategies

Initially a potential issue will be ensuring all school healthcare staff receive proper training and education on proper dental screening techniques. The Bureau of Oral Health currently has an on-line training course for all designated screeners which will be made available to all school healthcare personnel at no cost and BOH will also be available to provide technical assistance and support for newly trained dental screeners.