

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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Sponsors are Making the Conference Possible

The Conference on Oral Health would not be possible without our generous sponsors. [Aetna Better Health of Kansas](#) joined us as a Silver Sponsor this week. Thank you so much to Aetna, [Delta Dental of Kansas](#), [CareQuest Institute for Oral Health](#), [Health Forward Foundation](#), and <https://www.sunflowerhealthplan.com/> for your support of Oral

Health Kansas and the Conference on Oral Health! Sponsorships are still available. Learn more by [clicking here](#) or contacting us at info@oralhealthkansas.org.



Indigenous Peoples Day: Disparities Persist

Monday, October 11 marked the first time a U.S. President recognized Indigenous Peoples' Day by issuing a [proclamation naming October 11, 2021 Indigenous Peoples' Day](#). While it is not a federal holiday, there is a movement to change the Columbus Day holiday to Indigenous People's Day in honor of the contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders throughout the history of our nation and in recognition of the displacement and atrocities Indigenous Peoples suffered after Christopher Columbus and other European explorers arrived on this continent. [National Public Radio aired a story](#) on October 11 sharing the perspective of Native Americans on Columbus Day. [Several states](#) have either officially changed the Columbus Day holiday or added Indigenous Peoples' Day to the celebration, including Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

The barriers Native Americans face continue, including in the form of health and oral health disparities. [According to the Pew Trusts](#), "Native Americans suffer from the poorest oral health of any population in the United States." [Community Catalyst released an issue brief](#) this summer on Medicaid coverage for American Indians/Alaska Natives noting that "AI/AN people have the highest rates of diabetes and higher rates of heart disease and high blood pressure than white adults." Access to optimally fluoridated water is also woefully inadequate on Tribal lands. Much more work needs to be done to understand the extent of the inequities and to remedy them in order to ensure Indigenous Peoples in the United States have equitable access to good health and oral health.



World Mental Health Day Serves As A Reminder

Last weekend was World Mental Health Day. The World Health Organization established the day to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world.

Mental health has been top of mind for so many of us as we learned to live with the social isolation that accompanied the COVID pandemic.

It is important to remember that oral health and mental health are connected as well. Earlier this year the University of Pennsylvania [published an article](#) asking, “Can a Tooth Infection Cause Depression?” The article highlights some of the findings from research about the connections to oral health for people with mental illnesses, including the association between depression and self-care neglect, as well as the fact that people with mental illnesses including bi-polar disorder often have dry mouth as a result of the medications they take. They also note that people with mental illnesses have higher statistical rates of missing teeth and tooth decay, which can impact their self-image and self-esteem.

Families USA and Mental Health America [published a fact sheet](#) called “A Deep Dive into the Connections Between Oral and Behavioral Health.” They observe that over half of Americans will be affected by behavioral health and that, “Oral health problems are often exacerbated when a person has behavioral health needs, and mental health is likely to be made worse by poor oral health.” People’s oral health and mental health are treatable, and it is important to see the signs and ask for help. Learn more from our partners at Families USA and the researchers at the University of Pennsylvania.



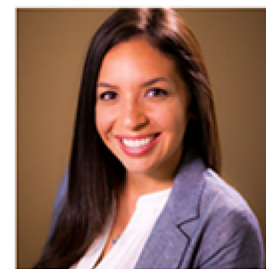
Upcoming Events

- 2021 Conference on Oral Health, presented by Oral Health Kansas, November 4 and 5. Register [here](#).
- Webinar series: Integrating Race Conversations into Healthy Patient-Provider Interactions, 3rd Friday of every month at 12:00pm CST. Find more information [here](#).
- Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK) Conference, virtually on October 16, 9:30am-5:30pm. Register [here](#).
- Webinar: Managing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) with Dental and Oral Health, December 8, 8:00pm-10:00pm CST. Register [here](#).



This week we are saying goodbye to our former program officer at Health Forward Foundation, Tania Hewitt-Mader. She helped lead the Foundation's work to establish a Policy and Civic Engagement grant program, which has had a significant impact on our

organization and many others in Kansas and Missouri. Tania was a great support to Oral Health Kansas, and we are grateful for her dedication to oral health and policy work. We wish her the best of luck as she begins a new adventure with her family business.



picture courtesy of Health Forward Foundation



Sugary Drink Display Sanitation

Out of an abundance of caution, we are suspending use of the Sugary Drink Display until further notice.



During this time, hand washing and social distancing is on everyone's mind. We want everyone to have the comfort of knowing we sanitize our sugary drink displays. They are wiped down and cleaned off after they have been returned.

Follow Us



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