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ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
Weekly Wednesday Update

*Our Mission:
To improve oral health
in Kansas through
advocacy,
public awareness
and education.*

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**Holiday
Hours**

**The Oral
Health
Kansas
Office will be**

Happy Holidays

Oral Health Kansas would like to share our warmest regards for the most joyous holiday season. We hope that you and your family have a peaceful and safe season.

2011 overall has been a very successful year. Thanks to your support, enthusiasm and encouragement. We look forward to a bright and prosperous 2012.

Best wishes to you and your family, Tanya, Marcia, Julie



Updates on the Affordable Care Act

The U.S. Supreme Court has scheduled oral arguments on the Affordable Care Act for March 26-28, 2012, just three days after the law's second anniversary. Kansas is one of 26 states that is

closed
Friday
December,
23rd and
Monday
December,
26 in
observance
of the
holiday.

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suing the federal government citing that the mandate that all Americans have health insurance is unconstitutional. A decision in the case is expected before the Court's term ends in June. That timeline is meaningful, because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has set June 29 as the deadline for states to request funding to establish an Exchange under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Kansas has a \$1.0 million planning grant to do some basic planning for ACA implementation, and last summer the state turned back a \$31.5 million innovation grant which would have poised the state to be well prepared to implement an Exchange by January 1, 2014. Depending on the outcome and the timing of the Supreme Court's decision, Kansas may still have time to apply for an establishment grant next summer.

Last week the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that they will not define a uniform set of "Essential Health Benefits" that must be included in all health plans offered through the ACA's Exchanges. The ACA spells out the general categories of services that must be included in the Essential Health Benefits package, including pediatric dental services. Advocates have been anxiously awaiting a set of guidelines for what services will be included in the Essential Health Benefits package, but this turn of events changes the advocacy venue from the national to the state level. States will be able to specify the benefits offered, which means much work must begin at the state level to determine the benefit packages. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius cited the importance of states' role by giving them "the flexibility to design coverage options that meet their unique needs." Each state will designate an existing health insurance plan as the benchmark for that state's Essential Health Benefits plan. Each state will have the option to pick one of the following health insurance plans as that state's benchmark:

- One of the three largest small-group plans in the state.
- One of the three largest health plans for state employees.
- One of the three largest national health insurance options for federal employees.
- The largest health maintenance organization operating in the state's commercial insurance market.

The Kansas Insurance Department's health exchange planning teams will begin work again after the new year. We anticipate the issue of Kansas' definition of the Essential Benefits Package will be addressed through the work of the steering committee and its planning teams. Oral Health Kansas continues to serve on the steering committee and three of the six planning teams.

If you have an idea, story or suggestion for a Oral Health Kansas Weekly Wednesday Update please send an email to jparnell@oralhealthkansas.org

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