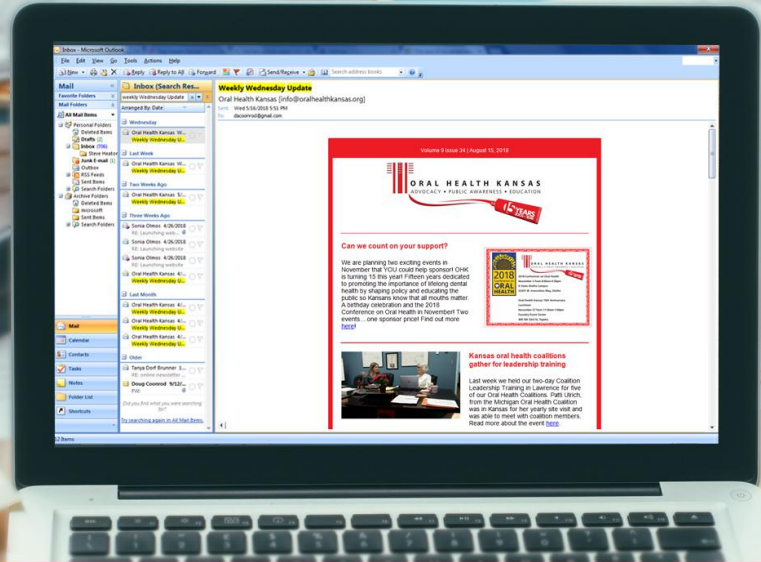




**ORAL HEALTH KANSAS**  
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



## 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](#).

Click here to sign up for our [Weekly Wednesday Update](#).

### March 17, 2021

Volume 12, Issue 11

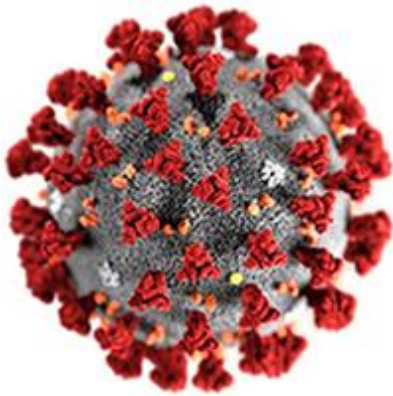
## Oral Health Kansas One Year Later

It is hard to believe a year has gone by since the COVID19 pandemic began and OHK made the decision to work remotely on Sunday, March 15 in order to keep staff safe. Each staff member still remembers the way they felt with the uncertainty of what was going to happen. Staff quickly switched gears and responded daily to questions from providers and consumers in regards to dental visit safety and PPE. We created a [consumer guide](#) to help answer questions about what a dental office may look like after COVID. We created an on-line version of our acid attack demonstration to help families learn how to stay healthy at home. We switched our face to face workshops into virtual workshops within a matter of



months! You can continue to read a list of our activities [here](#). In the midst of it all, we advocated for an increase in the Medicaid dental rate. We also held our first virtual [Conference on Oral Health](#)! Although the days were challenging and we sensed the hardships, we continued to adapt and accomplish our mission to improve oral health in Kansas through advocacy, public awareness and education.

We will continue to work remotely this year. If you need to reach us by mail our address is PO Box 4567, Topeka, Kansas, 66604 or email us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org). Our office phone number is 785-235-6039.



## Dental Professionals Providing The COVID Vaccine

Last week we told you about Governor Kelly's Executive Order authorizing most healthcare professionals to provide COVID vaccines. [Executive Order 21-06](#) is a temporary authorization of additional vaccinators, including dentists and dental hygienists, during the public health state of disaster emergency. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also [has amended the emergency declaration](#) to authorize dentists and dental

students to provide COVID vaccines. The American Dental Association [shared additional information](#) about this federal policy change.

We are learning more about what this means for dentists and hygienists. **If dental professionals are interested in volunteering at COVID vaccine sites, the best course of action is to contact the local health department to ask how to be a part of the community vaccination process.** Contact information for each county's local health department in Kansas can be found on page 6 of [this directory](#).

Kansas providers can find additional information about being a COVID vaccine provider at this state website: <https://www.kansasvaccine.gov/31/Vaccine-Providers>. Additional information is available on the federal government's [Public Health Emergency website](#).

As of March 24, the state will be in Phases 3 and 4 of a [five-phase COVID vaccination plan](#). Frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine plan are available [on this page](#) from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

If you have any questions about the opportunity for dentists and hygienists to provide COVID vaccines, please contact us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org). If we do not have the answer, we will do our best to find it for you.



## Oral Health And COVID-19: Increasing The Need For Prevention And Access

Last month we shared a [research study from the Journal of Clinical Periodontology](#) that found the risk of COVID-19 complications is significantly higher for people with moderate-to-severe gum disease (periodontitis), as compared to those with milder or no gum disease. Gum disease is an inflammatory condition, and COVID-19 is as well. The connection is significant. The study went on to say that gum disease is associated with higher risk of intensive care unit admission, the need for assisted ventilation, and even death due to COVID-19.

A [commentary from the Preventing Chronic Disease](#) journal underscores the importance of the study's findings. Populations that are at high risk for COVID-19 include people in low socioeconomic groups, older adults, people living in rural areas, and people who are uninsured. These populations are also at increased risk for dental and other chronic diseases. The commentary goes on to say, "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that 'non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians and Alaska Natives generally have the poorest oral health of any racial and ethnic groups in the United States,' and these same populations have disproportionately higher incidence of COVID-19 related infection and death." These at-risk populations also face more barriers to accessing dental and health care services.

The authors note that removing policy, regulatory, workforce, and reimbursement barriers and incentivizing prevention would increase access to oral health care and improve health for the populations most at risk for COVID-19 complications and oral diseases. One recommendation the authors suggest is to revisit reimbursement models that typically incentivize surgical restorative procedures like crowns and multi-surface fillings and move to "prioritize preventive and nonsurgical, nonaerosolizing treatments and make them more financially sustainable."

Medicaid coverage of dental services is one key way of reaching the populations most vulnerable to oral diseases, as well as COVID-19. Kansas has limited coverage of dental care for adults, and Oral Health Kansas is working on advocating for comprehensive coverage. To learn more and get involved in the advocacy, contact us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).



## Register for the Oral Health Summit

Watch the Oral Health Summit on May 21! The Health Group of the Appalachia Funders Network is hosting the virtual Appalachian Oral Health Summit. The summit will engage oral health coalition leaders from around the region, oral health researchers and practitioners, and national experts in the field advocating for oral health

care access.

Tanya Dorf Brunner, OHK's Executive Director and Chair of the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions will be part of a panel, National Trends and Opportunities in Oral Health, along with staff members of Community Catalyst. Find more information [here](#) and register!



## Upcoming Events

- 2021 Conference on Oral Health, November 4 and 5. More information will be provided as we continue to plan.
- Accelerating Health Equity, March 16-18, 2021, hosted by the American Hospital Association's Community Health Improvement and the Institute for Diversity and Health Equity. Click [here](#) to register.
- The American Dental Association will host a "Health Effects of Vaping" webinar on March 25, 2021 at 12pm CST. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Voices for Kids will host an interactive training on telemedicine for Kansas families who have children with disabilities and/or special health care needs. The date is April 15. Click [here](#) for more information.

---

Congratulations to Marlou Wegener on 30 years of service at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas! Marlou is a former Oral Health Kansas Board member, was a part of our first Dental



Champions Leadership Program class, and currently chairs our Dental Champions Advisory Board. Her co-workers honored her milestone last week, and we congratulate her on her exemplary service to the state of Kansas. We know that Oral

Health Kansas is a better organization because of her influence and involvement. Thank you!



## 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



**Oral Health Kansas** • PO BOX 4567Topeka, KS 66604  
 785.235.6039 phone • 785.233.5564 fax [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org)  
 Copyright 2021