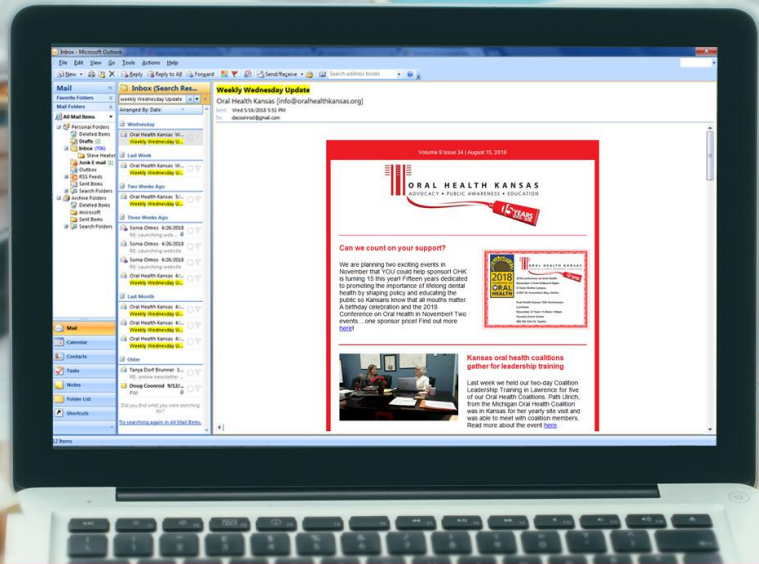




ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



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](#).

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Medicaid Expansion Improves Oral Health

Kansas is one of only 12 states that has not expanded its Medicaid program. Over 165,000 Kansans would be eligible for health and dental coverage if we expand the KanCare program. So far, the state has forfeited \$4.7 million federal dollars because we have failed to

expand.

New research out of the state of Michigan offers more reasons to expand KanCare. The *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* published the results of a study from the University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation last month. The state of Michigan expanded their Medicaid program in 2014, and it covers more than 895,000 people who are eligible for dental benefits including fillings, cleanings, and dentures.

The study tracked a group of people enrolled in the Medicaid expansion program, and it showed that 57% of people who had seen a dentist reporting improved oral health. Three-fourths of the people who reported their oral health had improved also said their Medicaid expansion coverage had helped them be more confident and do a better job at work. Of the people who were unemployed, 60% said the new coverage had helped them look for a job.

Most of the people involved in the study had been uninsured prior to enrolling in the Michigan Medicaid expansion program. Some even said they had to rely on emergency rooms for relief of dental pain prior to enrolling in Medicaid. The researchers reported that one study participant told them, ""My teeth were pretty bad...and they fixed it up fine, and now...I feel better when I am looking for a job...I feel better because my appearance has changed a lot. That has helped me a lot, physically and mentally."

The findings of this study show that Medicaid expansion not only has a significant impact on people's oral health, but also on their confidence and ability to work. According to the [American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute's research](#), 26% of low-income Kansans report that the appearance of the teeth and mouth affect their ability to interview for a job.

Oral Health Kansas supports Medicaid expansion because it will extend medical and dental benefits to over 165,000 low-income adults. This group of people works in jobs that do not provide insurance, and they frequently struggle to access dental care. Medicaid expansion will not only improve their health, but also their confidence and ability to get and maintain good jobs.

Learn more about the Michigan study in [this March 23, 2021, article from Medical News](#). Learn more about the efforts to expand Medicaid in Kansas from the [Alliance for a Healthy Kansas](#).



Legislature Nears First Adjournment

This week the Kansas Legislature is wrapping up the main part of the legislative session. They will meet until Friday, April 9, which is called "First Adjournment." The legislative work this week is on the floor of the House and Senate as they vote on bills and then in conference committees as the two chambers work out differences between their versions of bills. The goal is

for most bills to have passed by the end of the week. Then the Legislature will take a break and come back on May 3rd to finish all unresolved issues and review any gubernatorial vetoes of bills they passed.

The budget is always the biggest issue of the session, and the budget conference committee has been negotiating throughout this week. At this writing, one oral health issue remains to be resolved in the budget negotiations. The Senate has added \$150,000 for school-based oral health programs, but the House has not added that funding. Oral Health Kansas advocated for a legislative study of the unmet dental needs for low-income Kansans, older people, and people living in rural areas. The House recommended this study, and we will advocate to schedule that study this summer. It is also important to note that last week House Democrats attempted a Medicaid Expansion amendment to their budget bill, but it failed with only 46 affirmative votes.

Last week, Governor Kelly signed SB 40-addressing the Kansas Emergency Management Act-into law. This bill included the expiration of all current executive orders on March 31st. Governor Kelly re-issued several pandemic-related Executive Orders on April 1, including the statewide mask mandate. On that same day legislative leaders rejected the mask mandate order, leaving the issue to be decided by county and city governments. Read more about this from the [Kansas Reflector](#). The Governor also re-issued the [Executive Order](#) that authorizes several health care professions, including dentists and hygienists, to provide COVID vaccines. That order remains in effect. A full list of the Governor's Executive Orders on the pandemic and other issues [can be found on her website](#).



Marketplace Special Enrollment Extended

Under the [American Rescue Plan](#), many people who buy their own health insurance directly through the Marketplace will become eligible to receive increased tax credits to reduce their premiums. Starting April 1, 2021, consumers enrolling in Marketplace coverage through HealthCare.gov will be able to take advantage of these increased savings and lower costs.

Acknowledging that the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) continues to constitute exceptional circumstances that are sufficient to qualify individuals for an exceptional circumstances Special Enrollment Period (SEP), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will extend access to a 30-day SEP on HealthCare.gov until August 15, 2021. This action will allow individuals and families more time to access the SEP and enroll in Marketplace coverage with the increased tax credits to reduce their premiums, and for current enrollees to change plans in response to the availability of increased tax credits if they wish to do so.

Additionally, beginning in early July on HealthCare.gov, consumers who have received or have been determined eligible to receive unemployment compensation for any week during 2021 may be able to get another increase in savings when enrolling in new Marketplace coverage or updating their existing Marketplace application and enrollment. These savings to be made available starting in early July for eligible consumers are in addition to the increased savings available to consumers on HealthCare.gov starting April 1.

To view a press release about this announcement, visit: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/03/23/2021-special-enrollment-period-access-extended-to-august-15-on-healthcare.gov-for-marketplace-coverage.html>.

To view a fact sheet about this announcement, visit: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/extended-access-opportunity-enroll-more-affordable-coverage-through-healthcaregov>



National Minority Health Month

April is National Minority Health Month and a perfect time to bring awareness to the unmet dental needs for people of color. Nonelderly adults who are Hispanic, Any Race, were nearly two times more at risk of not having

dental insurance coverage than were nonelderly adults who are non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), untreated cavities and racial or ethnic groups. Nearly twice as many non-Hispanic Black or Mexican American adults have untreated cavities as non-Hispanic White adults. Barriers that may lead to these oral health disparities can vary from access to dental care, not understanding dental benefits or simply not taking oral health as a precedence.

You can read more about unmet dental needs in Kansas by reading a report collaborated between OHK and the Kansas Health Institute. Read the report [here](#).



Upcoming Events

- 2021 Conference on Oral Health, November 4 and 5. More information will be provided [here](#).
- Learning from Clinicians and their Patients: Why Oral Health Collaboration is Essential to Overall Health Outcomes Webcasts, April 20, 3pm CST. Register [here](#).

- American Academy of Pediatrics Webinar: Addressing Adolescent Vaping and E-Cigarette Use, Friday, April 23, 2021 12-1pm CST. Register [here](#).



We have lots of reasons to celebrate Oral Health Kansas Executive Committee member Dr. Nick Rogers! He serves in so many capacities at the local, state, and national levels, including as the Immediate Past President of the

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Foundation. This month he is adding another recognition, as he will be honored with the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry's 2020 Alumni Achievement Award. After a postponement due to the pandemic last year, Dr. Rogers will receive his award in a virtual ceremony on April 16. Congratulations, Dr. Rogers! We are excited for you and so happy you are receiving this recognition.



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.



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