

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](#).

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August 11, 2021

Volume 12, Issue 30



Medicare Dental Benefits Heating Up

Oral Health Kansas is among many advocacy organizations calling on Congress to add dental benefits to the popular Medicare program. The U.S. Senate Finance Committee is considering a budget bill that includes adding dental, vision, and hearing benefits to Medicare.

When the Medicare program was created in 1965 **dental care was not included** in the list of services covered, and very few additions have been made to Medicare over the years. In

recent years oral health and aging advocates have been pushing Congress to add coverage of dental care. Medicare Advantage programs are add on benefit packages people can purchase to supplement their Medicaid coverage, and these often include dental care. Large numbers of Medicare beneficiaries are not able to afford Medicare Advantage plans, which means the **gap in overall health coverage in the Medicare program remains**.

[An article in Kaiser Health News this week](#) explains some of the history of Medicare and why coverage gaps still remain.

A [new bipartisan poll from Families USA](#) shows that **8 in 10 Americans believe oral health coverage should be added to Medicare** and that 9 in 10 believe dental care is a part of overall health care. The poll also demonstrated that over half of people who are over 65 have avoided necessary care because of the cost. The Medicare program as it stands now makes **dental care accessible only to people who can afford it**, despite the fact that all working people pay into the Medicare program throughout their lives.

[Over 542,000 Kansans would have access to dental care](#) if Congress adds dental benefits to Medicare. Having access to affordable dental care means people can avoid costly dental procedures that are necessary when care is delayed. It also means people's overall health will improve, their self-esteem increases, their job prospects are higher, and their family's budgets are stable. No one should have to choose between dental care and food or electricity.

Members of Congress are working on legislation and on budget bills that would add a Medicare dental benefit. **Please join Oral Health Kansas in asking our Congressional delegation to add dental benefits to Medicare.** Use [this form from the Center for Medicare Advocacy](#) to send a message to your members of Congress. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@oralhealthkansas.org.



Back To School And Your Child's Oral Health

It's hard to believe the summer is over and most children will be back in school this month. New school supplies are a must so why not pick out a new toothbrush! While families are getting back into the school routine, don't forget to continue your oral health

routine with your child. Make time in the mornings for brushing teeth before heading out the door. In your child's lunch box, provide healthy snacks such as fruit and nuts. Avoid including sticky snacks. Pack a reusable water bottle for your child to get water throughout the day from the water bottle filling stations instead of reaching for sugary beverages.

If you didn't set up a dental check up before school started, make sure to schedule an appointment. Children need to maintain good oral health to be able to concentrate in school. Poor oral health can be harmful in school success.

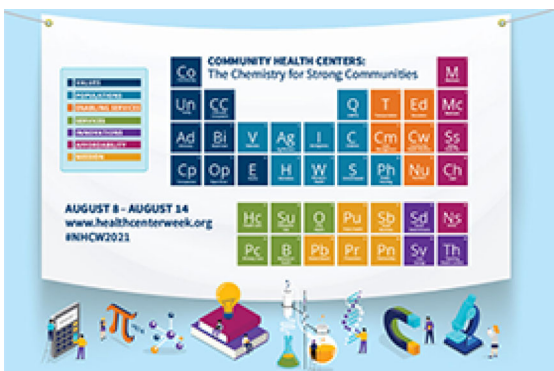


National Breastfeeding Month

Thank you to Kansas Governor Laura Kelly who issued a [proclamation for August](#) as National Breastfeeding Month. This year's theme of "Every Step of the Way" reminds us that we envision a world in which every family is supported at every step along the infant feeding journey. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), breastfeeding is good for both you and your baby. Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for most babies. As your baby grows, your breast milk will change to meet his or her nutritional needs. Breastfeeding can also help protect you and your baby against some short- and long-term illnesses and diseases.

An article in [Mouth Healthy](#) shared several recent studies, one in Pediatrics in 2015 and one in the August 2017 issue of the Journal of the American Dental Association, found that babies who were exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months were less likely to have teeth alignment issues such as open bites, crossbites, and overbites, than those exclusively breast fed for shorter lengths of time or not at all. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of bottle tooth decay, exposing baby teeth to drinks with sugar.

Kansas now ranks 9th in the nation of infants exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months. Our state exceeds the national average in all measures - for the first time! Read more about the State of Breastfeeding in Kansas in [this report](#).



Celebrating National Health Center Week

August 4-14 is National Health Center Week! This year's theme is The Chemistry for Strong Communities. The theme fits perfect with the pandemic beginning last year and health centers taking on more responsibilities and patients. It has taken strong communities and workers to continue to keep our community healthy. Federally qualified health centers are facilities that are

primarily engaged in providing services that are typically furnished in an outpatient clinic and a critical component of the health care safety net. They provide services on a sliding fee scale or low or reduced costs of services based on annual income. When the COVID19 pandemic hit Kansas, many became unemployed and lost their insurance coverage, having to turn to safety net clinics for their health care and dental needs. They're essential to our Kansas communities. Click [here](#) to find a community care clinic near you.



Upcoming Events

- 2021 Conference on Oral Health, presented by Oral Health Kansas, November 4 and 5. More information will be provided [here](#).
- Alliance for a Healthy Kansas is hosting community meetings around the state to discuss Medicaid expansion. The next one is in Newton, August 19 from 6-7:30. For more information and locations, click [here](#).
- Webinar: Thursday, August 19, Treating Today's Multigenerational Patient Base, preventive care and the future of dentistry in the post-pandemic world. Click [here](#) for more information and to sign up.
- Community Care Network of Kansas Virtual Conference, September 20 - 23, 2021. Register [here](#).
- Kansas Public Health Association Virtual Conference, September 21-23, 2021. Register [here](#).



OHK was recently awarded a Technical Assistance Grant from Health Forward Foundation to begin focusing on Diversity,

Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our organization. We believe that all

Kansans should have equitable access to dental care and the ability to

maintain good oral health throughout their lives, regardless of their income, race, or ethnicity. We believe it is time for us to stop learning about inequities in an academic sense and put our knowledge into action. We are ready to use a social justice lens to address DEI



and to be prepared to use that DEI lens to make a lasting impact on the state's dental system. Thank you Health Forward Foundation for this opportunity!



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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