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**Fall for Smiles  
Fall**

Fall for Smiles is an annual campaign by Oral Health America (OHA) encouraging everyone to educate others on oral health this Fall. Remind your communities the importance of:

- healthy food choices
- regular dental visits
- brushing and flossing teeth
- avoiding tobacco

If you would like to participate, check out some fun activities!

**Deadline Extended**

The deadline for the Excellence in Oral Health Awards and Outstanding Dental Champion award has been extended to Monday, October 5 by 5pm. If you haven't submitted your nominations yet, you still have time!

[2015 Excellence in Oral Health Awards Nomination Form](#)

[2015 Outstanding Dental Champion Award Nomination Form](#)

Don't forget to register for the annual Oral Health Kansas Conference! We also have exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities!





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## Ways to Improve Oral Health

Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City (HCFGKC), provided a helpful [infographic](#) for ways to improve oral health care. Divided up by sections, you will see the various steps it takes to make changes in oral health care.



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## Kansas Economic Policy Conference

The 2015 State of the State Kansas Economic Policy Conference will be held October 22 at the University of Lawrence. For more information: [Kansas Economic Policy Conference](#).



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## Mouth Friendly Recipe

Want to snack on something sweet and good for you? Trail mix is always a good choice...salty and sweet! Here's a simple [recipe](#) to create your own trail mix. You can always add in extra's of your choice.

## Mind the Gap in Dental Insurance Usage

On September 29, the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute released a new study that shows the gap between utilization of dental benefits among children enrolled in Medicaid and in private insurance is narrowing. The report, however shows that the gap between Medicaid and private insurance utilization for adults remains large, especially in states like Kansas that do not have Medicaid dental benefits for adults.

According to the [Health Policy Institute report](#), Kansas is just above the national average of percentage of children enrolled in Medicaid who had a dental visit in the last year. In 2005, that percentage was just over 35 percent, and by 2013, it was up to 48 percent. Closer to 65 percent of kids enrolled in private insurance had a dental visit in the last year by 2013, but that percent was relatively unchanged between 2005 and 2013. Kansas ranks just below the national average for the gap between private insurance and Medicaid utilization for children. While the gap is narrowing - it decreased in Kansas by 50 percent, much work remains to increase the percentage of kids who visit the dentist regularly. The work of the oral health community over the last decade to do outreach to low-income kids in Kansas is paying off, as thousands more are getting the dental treatment they need. This report shows the work needs to continue to ensure kids on Medicaid have as much access to dental treatment as kids with private coverage.

Kansas ranks well above the national average of 60 percent of adults with private insurance visiting the dentist over



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## Drink Display

Whew! We are busy! Our drink displays are quickly making their way around Kansas. One of our displays enjoyed visiting LaFamilia Senior/Community Center 4th Annual Fiesta Fundraiser! And we had two more out the door this week!

We have open slots for reservations in the late fall! If you want to reserve the drink display for your organization or event, [email us](#). Remember the display is free to use and return shipping costs are reimbursed by Oral Health Kansas.



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the last year. There was almost no change from 2005 to 2013 in adult utilization of private dental insurance. The percentage of Kansas adults enrolled in Medicaid who visit the dentist was not included in the Health Policy Institute study, because they only looked at states that offer comprehensive dental benefits for adults on Medicaid.

The study's authors, economists Marko Vujicic, PhD, and Kamyar Nasseh, PhD, noted, "The public-private gap in dental care utilization for adults is much larger than for children." They went on to say, "Our analysis also shows convincingly that dental care utilization trends for adults and children continue to diverge... Federal and state policymakers simply have not prioritized adult dental to the same level as for children."

To learn more about Oral Health Kansas' efforts to secure a comprehensive Medicaid dental benefits for adults, please visit our [public policy webpage](#).



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## Sedgwick County Public Health Cuts

This week, the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) News Service [published an article](#) about the Sedgwick County Commission's recent \$540 million cut to the local public health department. The story focuses on the debate over the role of government and its effects on the

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health department.

In August, the Sedgwick County Commission cut funding for the health department, including cuts to the oral health programs and initiatives aimed at improving the county's immunization and infant mortality rates. Advocates worked together to fight the cuts, and some were restored. Kansas Health Foundation vice president for programs Jeff Willett told the KHI News Service, "Communities that have strong public health systems are going to be healthier communities; they're going to be more vibrant communities. So, as we look ahead, I think it's important to know that we have to do a better job of making the case for public health."

The Wichita Eagle also reported on the effects of the health department cuts this week.

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## Prevent Tobacco Use With "Tobacco 21"

Today a bill was introduced in Congress that would raise the legal age to purchase tobacco products from age 18 to 21. The bill, sponsored by Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO), is aimed at reducing tobacco use among young people. Reporting on the bill introduction, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids said, "Increasing the age of sale for tobacco products to 21 will reduce tobacco use among youth and young adults - age groups when nearly all tobacco use begins and that are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry."

According to the Institutes of Medicine

(IOM), 90 percent of adults who smoke started smoking before age 19. A [March 2015 report](#) from the IOM says, "...adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine." Rates of youth smoking are declining, but e-cigarette use among young people is rising, which leaves countless young people vulnerable to a lifelong addiction to nicotine.

A group of health advocates in Kansas City is working on a proposal to increase the legal age to 21 in the area. Over eighty cities, including Columbia, Missouri, and the state of Hawaii have passed similar Tobacco 21 policies. Oral Health Kansas joined a growing group of organizations supporting Tobacco 21 policies. To learn more about how to join the Tobacco 21 movement, please contact [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).



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