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Statewide Children's Advocacy Organization Recognized
Kansas Action for Children Honored for Their Efforts to Improve Oral Health

TOPEKA – At its recent annual conference, Oral Health Kansas, the statewide oral health coalition of approximately 200 individuals and organizations, recognized a statewide organization for their efforts to improve children's oral health.

Kansas Action for Children (KAC), a statewide children's advocacy organization based in Topeka, was honored with the coalition's annual *Excellence in Oral Health* award as an Outstanding Organization.

According to Sharon Tidwell, President of the Oral Health Kansas Board, KAC has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to children's oral health in the state of Kansas. She said, "KAC is an outstanding partner in promoting oral health for children. Through their efforts, they have demonstrated a clear understanding of the direct connection between oral health and overall health and well-being."

In 2004, Kansas Action for Children implemented a statewide public awareness campaign for children's oral health called *Your Mouth Matters*. The campaign included television commercials; a fun, colorful poster aimed at pediatricians and family practice physicians that stressed the general guidelines for preventive dental care; postcards and a "Let's Talk Pop" toolkit for advocates trying to change school policies related to sugary beverages and snacks. Recently, KAC spearheaded a coalition of Kansas advocates encouraging Congress to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which included several oral health provisions.

Teresa Schwab, Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, said "Kansas Action for Children understands that dental care should not be considered a luxury and that taking care of children's oral

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ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

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health puts them in a better position to succeed in school. Oral disease is almost entirely preventable, which is why efforts like theirs are so important.”

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Founded in 2003 as the statewide oral health coalition, Oral Health Kansas coordinates state-level policy initiatives focused on oral health prevention, access to dental care, oral health workforce, oral health status and leadership. The coalition's policy efforts focus on the most vulnerable Kansans, including children, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, the elderly, those living in poverty and those living in rural areas of the state. Oral Health Kansas is a membership organization with over 200 members representing a diverse, multidisciplinary group of individuals and organizations, all working together to improve oral health in Kansas.

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