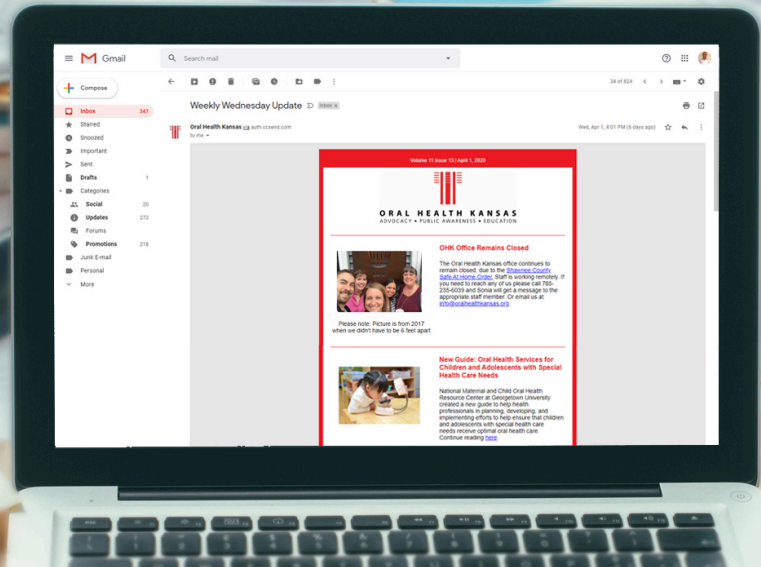




**ORAL HEALTH KANSAS**  
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION



## 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](#).

January 21, 2026

Volume 17, Issue 3

Scan the QR code



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**Weekly  
Wednesday  
Update.**



## Rate Advocacy Push as Legislative Session Begins

On Friday of this week and early next week the Senate and House budget subcommittees will hear testimony on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's budget, which means we will begin making the case to lawmakers to finish the job on the Medicaid dental rate increase. Over two dozen organizations and advocates are joining us in the advocacy to

ask for \$12 million in State General Funds to complete the rate increase to get all the Medicaid dental rates close to the commercial level. More information and talking points are available on our [advocacy webpage](#).

There are two things you can do this week to help advocate for the rate increase:

**1.** If you are in the district of one of the members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, please **send them an email** to explain why this rate increase is so important. The highest targets for contact this week are the members of the Subcommittee on Human Services, and their names are in bold. They need to hear from you by Friday morning.

Senator	County	District	Email
Larry Alley	Cowley	32	<a href="mailto:Larry.Alley@senate.ks.gov">Larry.Alley@senate.ks.gov</a>
Rick Billinger	Sherman	40	<a href="mailto:Rick.Billinger@senate.ks.gov">Rick.Billinger@senate.ks.gov</a>
Renee Erickson	Sedgwick	30	<a href="mailto:Renee.Erickson@senate.ks.gov">Renee.Erickson@senate.ks.gov</a>
Michael Fagg	Butler	14	<a href="mailto:Michael.Fagg@senate.ks.gov">Michael.Fagg@senate.ks.gov</a>
Cindy Holscher	Johnson	8	<a href="mailto:Cindy.Holscher@senate.ks.gov">Cindy.Holscher@senate.ks.gov</a>
<b>Jeff Klemp</b>	<b>Leavenworth</b>	<b>5</b>	<a href="mailto:Jeff.Klemp@senate.ks.gov">Jeff.Klemp@senate.ks.gov</a>
<b>Rick Kloos</b>	<b>Shawnee</b>	<b>3</b>	<a href="mailto:Rick.Kloos@senate.ks.gov">Rick.Kloos@senate.ks.gov</a>
<b>Stephen Owens</b>	<b>Harvey</b>	<b>31</b>	<a href="mailto:Stephen.Owens@senate.ks.gov">Stephen.Owens@senate.ks.gov</a>
Virgil Peck	Montgomery	15	<a href="mailto:Virgil.Peck@senate.ks.gov">Virgil.Peck@senate.ks.gov</a>
Mike Petersen	Sedgwick	28	<a href="mailto:Mike.Petersen@senate.ks.gov">Mike.Petersen@senate.ks.gov</a>
<b>Pat Pettey</b>	<b>Wyandotte</b>	<b>6</b>	<a href="mailto:Pat.Pettey@senate.ks.gov">Pat.Pettey@senate.ks.gov</a>

**2.** If you are in the district of one of the members of the House Social Services Budget Committee, please **send them an email** to explain why this rate increase is so important. They need to hear from you by Tuesday morning.

Representative	County	District	Email
Barbara Ballard	Douglas	44	<a href="mailto:Barbara.Ballard@house.ks.gov">Barbara.Ballard@house.ks.gov</a>
David Buehler	Leavenworth	40	<a href="mailto:David.Buehler@house.ks.gov">David.Buehler@house.ks.gov</a>
Will Carpenter	Butler	75	<a href="mailto:Will.Carpenter@house.ks.gov">Will.Carpenter@house.ks.gov</a>
Mike King	Harvey	74	<a href="mailto:Mike.King@house.ks.gov">Mike.King@house.ks.gov</a>
Melissa Oropeza	Wyandotte	37	<a href="mailto:Melissa.Oropeza@house.ks.gov">Melissa.Oropeza@house.ks.gov</a>
Allen Reavis	Atchison	63	<a href="mailto:Allen.Reavis@house.ks.gov">Allen.Reavis@house.ks.gov</a>
Susan Ruiz	Johnson	23	<a href="mailto:Susan.Ruiz@house.ks.gov">Susan.Ruiz@house.ks.gov</a>

Angela Stiens	Johnson	39	<a href="mailto:Angela.Stiens@house.ks.gov">Angela.Stiens@house.ks.gov</a>
Sean Willcott	Jackson	62	<a href="mailto:Sean.Willcott@house.ks.gov">Sean.Willcott@house.ks.gov</a>

**Share this alert with as many of your colleagues as you can.** We need to ensure legislators know how many Kansans, providers, and small business owners are counting on them to finish the job of strengthening the Medicaid dental provider network. **Please also ask your colleagues to [sign onto our advocacy coalition](#)** to get regular updates and include their office names on the list of organizations supporting the rate increase.



## Championing Health, Confidence and Connection

As part of the Pathways to Oral Health initiative, we are continually inspired by partners who help drive meaningful change for Kansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. One of those partners is the [Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities](#), a statewide leader in advocacy, health equity, and systems change. Project Coordinator, Monica Turner, sat down with Allyson McCain, Deputy Director; Whit Downing, VP of Policy and Programming and Self-advocate; and Lola Kernell, Advocacy Coordinator and Self-advocate to learn more about their mission. Be ready to be amazed. Read the blog story [here](#).



## Maternal Health Awareness

January 23 is Maternal Health Awareness Day and a powerful reminder that caring for a mother's health means caring for every part of her body including her smile. Oral health plays a crucial role during pregnancy, as hormonal changes can increase the risk of gum disease, tooth decay, and pregnancy-related gingivitis. Maintaining your oral health and visiting the dentist during pregnancy is safe! A dental examination during

pregnancy and treatment of existing oral disease is an important step toward a healthy pregnancy. When a mother has a healthy mouth, it starts baby on the right path for good oral health.

Here are some steps to maintaining your oral health while pregnant:

- brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- flossing daily
- staying hydrated (drink water!)
- visiting the dentist

- Tips and Tricks one pager resource with lots of information:
- [Pregnancy, Gum Disease and Diabetes](#)
- [Pregnancy, Gum Disease and Diabetes in Spanish](#)
- [Morning sickness](#)
- [Morning sickness in Spanish](#)
- [Pregnancy and Dental Care](#)
- [Pregnancy and Dental Care in Spanish](#)

You can also find information on our [Pregnancy and Oral Health webpage](#).

By raising awareness about the connection between maternal and oral health, we empower expectant and new mothers to protect their well-being and give their babies a healthier start in life. A healthy oral health start of life!

For dental providers, CareQuest Institute for Oral Health provides a free webinar, [Exploring the Myths and Misconceptions About Oral Health and Pregnancy](#) to integrate into their patients treatment plan. Check it out!



## February is Children's Dental Health Month

Next month is National Children's Dental Health Month! Teaching children early about the importance of oral health, will guide them into having healthy mouths into their adulthood! Baby teeth are important and should be taken care of, even if they lose their baby teeth eventually. Read more about baby teeth and their functions on our [Tips and Tricks Baby Teeth Are Important](#). Wiping baby gums with a wet washcloth, after drinking a bottle, will help remove milk that sticks to their gums. You can find out more helpful hints on [Tips and Tricks Your Baby's First Year](#). Introduce a toothbrush early by giving your child a toothbrush to play with, put in their mouth to get used to and practice toothbrushing. You can also begin the [Brush Book Bed](#) (BBB) process early. The model is intended for ages 0-5 but can work with ANY age! It helps families create nightly routines. They brush their teeth together, read a book and go to bed, at the same time every night. Children learn best with routines and can grasp easier when they know what the next step is. And of course, this is a good step into early literacy! Reading 15 minutes a day allows quiet time for bonding and imagination!

We'll be providing more resources for Children's Dental Health Month for you to incorporate into activities. Watch our Weekly Wednesday Update!

## Kansas Mission of Mercy Volunteer Registration Open

The [Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation](#) is excited to have the Kansas Mission of Mercy (KMOM) in Manhattan this year. It will be held on January 30 and 31, 2026 at the Kansas National Guard Armory. If



you're interested in volunteering, registration is now open! There are different areas that you can be helpful with. You don't have to volunteer both days or all day, just an hour or two would help! Hand out food, walk with patients or if you speak Spanish, you can help interpret!

Oral Health Kansas (OHK) staff assists with exit surveys after patients are done with their services. If you're interested in helping OHK with exit surveys, let us know and we'll guide you in registering to volunteer. Check out the volunteer registration information [here](#).

For patients, they can visit this [link](#) for details on what services are provided and what to expect. Please share the flyer in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Thank you to the Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation for managing the logistics for the event, volunteers and all of the patients!



## Upcoming Events

- Course: An Introduction to Value-Based Care in Oral Health: Moving from Volume to Value, 1 CE. Click [here](#) for the course information.
- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).
- **Webinar:** Addressing Medical Emergencies in Dentistry, January 22, 6:00pm-7:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- Save the date! The 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13.



Last week the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition held their meeting at the Pine Ridge Parents as Teachers USD 501. Coalition Co-Chair and Parents as Teachers (PAT) educator, Veronica Byrd, hosted the meeting and shared

what the PAT play groups entail. Veronica also provided a demonstration of the Sugary Drink Display while OHK staff provided a demonstration of the Acid Attack Kit. Members shared updates and made a plan for what events they will be participating in this year.



If you're interested in joining the Shawnee County Oral Health Coalition, email us at [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org). The coalition's focus is early childhood and starting good oral health at a young age!





## Sugary Drink Display

We have Adult and Children's Sugary Drink Display's available for reservations. These displays are eye catching at exhibits, schools, library, dental offices, clinics and just about anywhere you see them! We only have a limited amount so please sign up soon if you're interested in reserving one. Click [here](#) to learn more about sugary drink display reservations!

### Follow Us



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