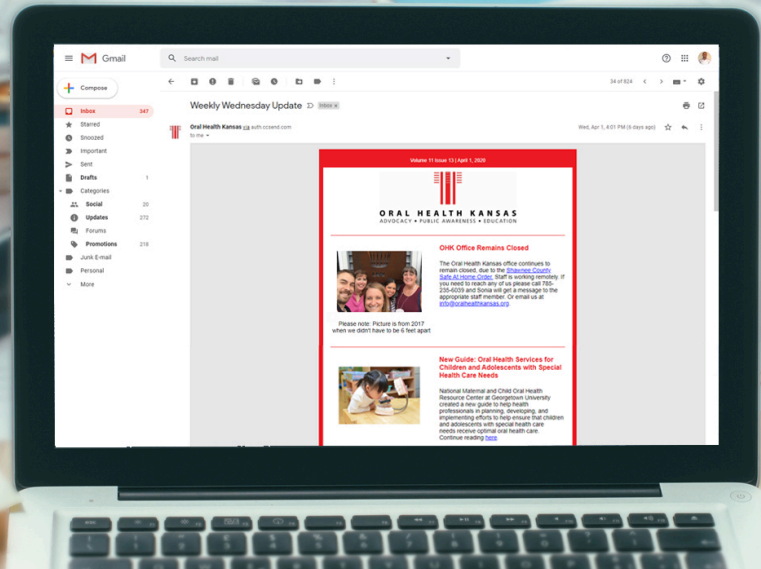




WEEKLY WEDNESDAY UPDATE

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](#).

October 21, 2026

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Scan the QR code



or click here to
sign up for our
[Weekly
Wednesday
Update](#).



Don't Have FOMO

Our annual Conference on Oral Health is coming up in less than a month and if you haven't registered, you still have time! Don't have a Fear of Missing Out! Register now! The in-person event will be on Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. Attendees come from different parts of the state as well as surrounding states.

Connect with peers in your field and branch out to meet people from completely different backgrounds.

We'll open doors at 7:30am. Walk around visiting exhibitors and have some breakfast on us! Be seated by 8:30am for welcome statements. Spend the day with us until 4:00pm. And earn up to **7.25 CE's** for the day! Join the plenary sessions and breakout sessions listed below. There's a chance to win a prize!

This year we'll have THREE Breakout Opportunities:

Enhancing Patient-Centered Care with the My Dental Care Passport & Sensory Modifications Guide

Speakers: Dr. MaryAnne Lynch Small, MPH, BDS, Oral Health Kansas; Abby Richwine, RDH, BS, Oral Health Kansas; Deb Pochop, Northwest Smile Center; Billie Donohue, CDA, Rogers Family Dentistry; Shelley Howard, RDH, BS DH, MHSA, UMKC School of Dentistry

Resilience, Well-Being, and Success in the Workplace

Speaker: Jody J. Fiorini, PhD, LCPC-S, NCC, ACS, Professor of Counseling Coordinator of the PhD in Education & Behavioral Studies - Clinical Counselor Education & Supervision track, Intervention Services & Leadership in Education (ISLE)

Building Your Advocacy Skills

Speaker: Mallory Lutz, BA, Little Government Relations

Check out the Plenary Sessions:

Oral Health Policy and Election Update

Speaker: Mallory Lutz, BA, Little Government Relations

AI in Dentistry

Speaker: Tatiana Y. Lin, MA, Kansas Health Institute

The State of Dental Practice: Costs, Insurance, and Access

Speaker: Deesha Bhaumik, PhD, American Dental Association Health Policy Institute

Hear from our amazing **Keynote Speaker, Whit Downing** as she shares what it was like for her as an individual with a disability going to the dentist.

Shifting the Narrative: Amplifying Voices

Whit Downing, Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

To view a description of the sessions, click [here](#).

Conference attendee registration fees give you access to all sessions, meals and raffle:

Regular Attendee Rate: \$125 | Walk-in Attendee Rate: \$150

Regular Student Rate: \$20 | Walk-in Student Rate: \$25

Register [here](#)! If you do not have an account with the Iris conference platform, you will need to create an account. Having problems? Email Sonia with questions at solmos@oralhealthkansas.org

Hotel Information: We have a hotel block at Courtyard by Marriott Kansas City Olathe 141.00 USD - 149.00 USD per night. Book your room at [this link](#). Last day to book is Thursday, October 29, 2026.

If you would like to exhibit, we have very **LIMITED SPACE** left. Sign up before we have to close exhibit spots! Find out more [here](#).

If you are interested in **sponsoring** our conference, there are different packages to choose from. You can find that information [here](#).



National Healthy Lung Month

October is Healthy Lung Month. It is an awareness campaign focused on educating the public about lung health and disease prevention. The mouth is the entry point to the respiratory tract and oral bacteria can reach the lungs. When oral hygiene is poor, harmful bacteria multiply and can be inhaled or aspirated into the lower airways.

Gum disease is also associated with respiratory infections. Research has linked periodontal disease to a higher risk of pneumonia and possibly to worse outcomes for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). These are associations, and the research is still evolving. Aspiration pneumonia is a particular concern for older adults, people with swallowing difficulties, nursing home residents, and patients on ventilators. Good oral care has been shown to reduce pneumonia risk in some of these settings. Medication side effects matter too. Some asthma and COPD medications cause dry mouth, which raises cavity risk, and inhaled corticosteroids can lead to oral thrush.

Tobacco and vaping are leading causes of lung disease and also raise the risk of gum disease, tooth loss, and oral cancer. Quitting is one of the most effective steps for both. There is FREE help available to all Kansans through the Kansas Tobacco Quitline. Check out their [website](#) for free helpful resources!

Here are some steps to help maintain your oral health and overall health:

- Brush twice a day and floss teeth daily to reduce harmful bacteria
- Rinse your mouth after using an inhaler with a corticosteroid, to help prevent thrush and dry mouth
- Tell your dentist about your lung condition and medications, and tell your doctor about any dental problems
- Visit the dentist at least every 6 months if possible.
- Quit tobacco and vaping, with support from a healthcare provider or KanQuit

You can also visit [Oral Health Kansas' website](#) for [Tips and Tricks on Tobacco and Your Oral Health](#) and [Vaping and your Oral Health](#).

New Election Engagement Toolkit

This election season, Oral Health Kansas is joining the American Network of Oral Health Coalitions (ANOHC) in an effort to bring oral health into policy discussions with candidates for federal office. Elections are an important opportunity to educate candidates about the oral health needs of the people and communities they hope to represent, and to begin building relationships that can continue after Election Day.



ANOHC has developed an **Election Engagement Toolkit** to make it easier for oral health advocates to participate in non-partisan election engagement. The toolkit includes:

- Guidance for finding and contacting federal-level candidates
- Sample questions on key oral health policy issues
- A customizable email template for candidate outreach

We encourage you to use the toolkit, tailor the resources with state and local information, and help bring oral health into conversations happening throughout the 2026 election season. [Download the Election Engagement Toolkit here.](#)

Share the toolkit with your own networks so that more oral health advocates have the resources they need to engage candidates.



The Votes Are In! We All Support Dental Coverage for Older or Disabled Americans and Veterans

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health partnered with Marketing for Change in July–August 2026 to conduct voter research examining how oral health policies continue to resonate with voters in the current political landscape. The polling finds that

dental coverage policies are some of the most universally supported health policy issues, attracting substantial support across the political spectrum. Dental coverage is a concern for everyone. Nine in 10 voters support Medicare dental, including 96% of Democrats, 86% of Republicans, and 92% of Independents.

The importance voters place on the issue is also clear:

- 78% consider the lack of dental coverage in Medicare a “crisis” or “major problem.”
- Approximately two-thirds of voters “love” the reform, including about half of Republicans.
- Opposition is limited: among the few voters who do not express support, most are undecided or have no opinion rather than actively opposed.
- Voters largely believe that workers have paid into Medicare throughout their adult lives, and it is only fair that Medicare covers dental care.

You can read the full report and its findings [here](#).

Upcoming Events

- Self paced courses: [Providing Oral Health Care to Autistic Individuals](#) and [Caring for Individuals with Disabilities: Practical Considerations for Dental Providers](#).



- **Webinar:** Rutgers University offering Perinatal Oral Health ECHO Series webinar. Check out the list of series [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Substance Use Disorders and Dentistry, hosted by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health on October 22 at 6:00pm CST. Register [here](#).
- **Event:** 2026 Conference on Oral Health will be Friday, November 13 at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. Click [here](#) for information.



This year we'll have a familiar face at our Conference on Oral Health on November 13. Renee Andriani is a graphic illustrator and has attended our conference for the past several years. You may see her at your table or sitting quietly in the back, but she's not just doodling. She's creating a masterpiece! At the end of the conference, she will have a draft design of what she took in and create an illustration of the day. We'll share the final illustration in the following weeks after the conference. Take a look at the 2025 design [here](#)!



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!

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