



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### Oral Health Kansas – A Statewide Oral Health Coalition

In 2003, interested parties from around the state identified critical issues which warranted a more coordinated effort to significantly improve the oral health status of Kansans. A statewide coalition named Oral Health Kansas, Inc. (OHK) was born of this group's efforts. An Executive Director was hired in October 2003, and the coalition became a statewide membership organization. The organization has been built to a coalition of approximately 130 individuals and organizations representing widely diverse backgrounds, including Head Start, private foundations, private insurers, Medicaid, State Office of Oral Health, Dental Association and private dentists, Dental Hygienists Association and private hygienists, education and schools of medicine, low-income dental clinics as well as pediatricians. Three major Kansas health foundations agreed to support the creation of the coalition and pledged three years of operational funding. Although the general operating budget for the coalition is approximately \$110,000 per year, the coalition has received additional grants aimed at specific projects. OHK continues to seek memberships, donations and other sources of funding. In the beginning, five strategic areas were identified where the coalition's efforts would be focused: access to care, prevention, oral health status, oral health leadership and workforce. OHK accomplishments related to these strategic areas include:

- (1) In the coalition's first year, OHK was successful in lobbying the state legislature to create an Office of Oral Health within the State Department of Health and Environment. An Oral Health Consultant was named Deputy Director of the new office, and there is currently a search for a Dental Director.
- (2) OHK has established an Education Task Team that is looking at the state health education standards and is also reviewing oral health curriculum with the intent of making it available to teachers in the state.
- (3) Thanks to recently passed legislation, hygienists in Kansas may now practice in Extended Care Settings, such as Head Start Centers, schools, prisons, nursing homes, etc. A coordinator, contracted by OHK, is in the process of putting together a toolkit and resource guide to assist dental hygienists as they begin to use this new care delivery model. OHK expect the resources to be available within the next year.
- (4) In January 2005, Kansas Health Institute (KHI) released a study on dental workforce and its impact on access to oral health care. OHK partnered with KHI to host a press conference and a workforce summit that brought together stakeholders and coalition members to discuss the study and to come up with a public policy agenda for the coalition specifically around workforce.
- (5) With a \$200,000 grant from United Methodist Health Ministry Fund and Kansas Health Foundation, OHK has recently begun work on a Dental Champions Leadership Program. Twenty oral health leaders from across the state will be selected to participate in intensive leadership training for one year while making a commitment to support the work of the coalition. Participants will receive training at the Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado and will receive significant training in-state as well.

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