

# Communities Can Improve the Oral Health Of Kentucky Kids

In Spring 2020, the Kentucky Oral Health Coalition asked for feedback from parents, health professionals, and school professionals about oral health care. **More than 200 caring adults in 100 counties responded to surveys or participated in focus groups.** A number of concerns, barriers, and opportunities were identified in those surveys and focus groups:

## Impacts of Poor Oral Health



Pain



Low self-esteem



Missing school



Inability to concentrate

## Barriers to Oral Health Care



Cost, including cost of basic dental hygiene products



Transportation



Lack of parental knowledge



Low priority for caregivers and the community

## Best Ways to Communicate About Oral Health Care



Through school system



Healthcare providers



Media



Learning from other parents

## Parents, health care providers, and school professionals identified concerns...

We don't have any pediatric dentists in this county or anyone who takes the medical card.

With generational poverty, oral health is not on the radar, at all.

[Providers] are not open and accepting of Medicaid, its more on a case-by-case basis.

[As a foster parent] dental is probably one of the lowest priorities in getting [kids] stabilized.

In the morning when you're trying to leave...you don't have time.

Your 6-weeks visit for yourself and the baby, at that time why can't you give the information then. At the next check...'have you scheduled your dental appointment yet? Do you need any resources?'

**...but our state, communities, schools, and health care providers can help overcome these barriers.**

## Solutions to Improve the Oral Health of Kentucky Kids

- ✓ Promote oral health literacy campaigns to teach the basics of oral health
- ✓ Integrate oral health services into doctor's visits to prevent cavities in children, pregnancy complications in women, and oral health infection in adults
- ✓ Ensure all children entering kindergarten have a dental screening/exam
- ✓ Establish school-based health programs and utilize the expanded access service program in schools to increase access for children right where they are learning
- ✓ Increase access to care in rural and urban communities by leveraging teledentistry to detect oral health concerns
- ✓ Sustain state funding for the Medicaid and KCHIP programs, and prioritize investments focused on closing the remaining gap in child health coverage

Kentucky Oral Health Coalition

# KOHC

[kyoralhealthcoalition.org](http://kyoralhealthcoalition.org)

KOHC conducted three targeted focus groups with parents and caregivers in Eastern Kentucky, Western Kentucky, and the West End of Louisville. We also surveyed parents and caregivers to gather additional information from regions across the state. In addition, we surveyed health professionals, including both oral health professionals and primary care health professionals, and school professionals to better understand oral health care needs in Kentucky.

Thank you to the following organizations for their help in disseminating the survey across the state: Kentucky PTA, Kentucky School Board Association, Kentucky Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Kentucky Primary Care Association, and Kentucky Oral Health Coalition members.