



Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program

Frequently Asked Questions -- Schools

In an effort to improve the oral health of Michigan children and ensure school readiness, [Public Act 316 of 2023](#) was enacted in December 2023 which significantly changed Michigan's original oral health assessment law. All children in Michigan enrolled in their first year of school, either kindergarten or 1st grade, are now **required** to receive an oral health assessment (dental screening). This requirement began in the 2024-2025 school year.

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program (KOHA) is administered by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). School personnel will likely be approached by parents and guardians of students seeking information and assistance with complying with this requirement. Following are answers to some commonly asked questions pertaining to the dental screenings.

- ***Why was Public Act 316 signed into law?***

Although fully preventable with good oral hygiene and access to dental care, tooth decay (cavities) remains the most common chronic disease of childhood and is responsible for 51 million missed school hours nationally each year. In Michigan, almost half of Head Start children have tooth decay and close to one-third have untreated decay. Oral health problems can cause distracting pain, and a child may be unable to eat foods essential for growth and unable to sleep well at night, all of which can prevent children from reaching their full learning potential. Students will benefit from having a dental screening because it will identify those who may have issues requiring dental care and connect them to that care.

- ***How is MDHHS accomplishing this program?***

MDHHS is required to establish and maintain a statewide dental screening program to provide the screenings at no cost to families. Similar to Michigan's school-based hearing and vision screening programs, the dental screening program is carried out at the local level through local health departments or their designee. The program is in Phase 3 of a three-year phased implementation plan with the goal for full statewide implementation by the end of 2025.

- ***Is a dental screening required for each student enrolling into school?***

Yes. All children in Michigan enrolled in their first year of school, either kindergarten or 1st grade, are now required to have a dental screening.

- ***When should the dental screening be done?***

The screening can be done up to 6 months before the start of school, or during the kindergarten school year through May 31st.

- ***Where can children get screened?***

Local health departments provide the screenings before the start of kindergarten at places like preschools, school registration events, and community events. They also provide the screenings within schools during the kindergarten school year. There is no cost for the screening if it is done by the local health department. Alternatively, a parent can have the screening done by their own family dentist.

- ***How can our school assist with this requirement?***

Schools should work with the local health department to offer on-site screenings and should notify parents of the screening requirement through various distribution channels such as parent letters, registration packets, and social media. Schools should provide information on where children can get screened, including any dates and times of screenings at the school. Schools can also assist by raising awareness among children and families about the importance of good oral health.

- ***How can we help families who do not have a dentist?***

Consider assisting families with enrollment into Michigan’s Healthy Kids Dental Program. You can also contact the local health department for help finding a dental home for a family and assistance with community dental resources. The Michigan Oral Health Directory lists dental safety-net resources by county.

- ***Do schools have to report any data to MDHHS?***

Yes. The law requires that all Michigan schools report their dental screening data to the State. Schools that receive proof of screening from a parent or guardian or local health department should check the “Dental Screened” checkbox in MCIR. Selecting this box in MCIR indicates a student was screened and fulfills the school’s reporting requirement to the State.

More information and supportive materials can be found on the MDHHS KOHA website. For additional questions about the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program, contact: MDHHS-KOHA@michigan.gov

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