



Jackson County Health Department

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Creating Healthy Communities



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 9, 2024

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Jackson County Health Department and Smiles on Wheels work to fight tooth decay through the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program

JACKSON COUNTY, MI – The start of a new year often brings an onset of new expectations and resolutions for many of us. This remains true with new legislation that recently passed. January 1, 2024 marked the onset of Senate Bill 280 which requires children entering a Michigan school as a Kindergartner to receive an oral health assessment.

While hearing and vision screenings have long been mandatory for Kindergarten entry, oral health has often been overlooked. Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic childhood diseases. More than half of the children in Michigan do not see a dentist each year and almost half of Michigan's students enrolled in a Head Start program are reported to have tooth decay. Senate bill 280 opens the door to add oral health screenings to the list of requirements to help families combat tooth decay, and further reduce any barriers to deficits in education that may be caused by a health risk factor.

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) program started in Jackson County in the 2022/2023 school year. Jackson County Health Department contracted Smiles on Wheels to conduct the KOHA program within the Jackson County School Districts. As work began on the program, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) saw the need to expand and further address concerns of decay. The passing of Senate Bill 280, now requires MDHHS to maintain a Kindergarten Oral Health Program with local health departments. The KOHA program is expected to serve 112,000 students statewide.

Jackson County Health Department, alongside Smiles on Wheels, conducts KOHA assessments at local school districts, by appointment and during Kindergarten Round ups. Families also have the option to take their children to their local dentist for a screening or choose to opt-out of the screening process. Jackson County Health Department and Smiles on Wheels look forward to working together with you and your child to fight tooth decay, and eliminate learning barriers for the students in Jackson County. For further information, please visit [Oral Health Assessment | Jackson County, MI](#).

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