



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 recently enacted which significantly changed Michigan's original oral health assessment law. Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, all children in Michigan enrolling into their first year of school are **required** to have an oral health assessment (dental screening); these assessments were previously optional.

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 assessments.

- ***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 assessment because it will identify those who may have issues requiring dental care and connect them to that care.

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

The law includes the requirement that MDHHS establish and maintain a dental oral health assessment program in each area of the state served by a local health department. To accomplish this, MDHHS is funding local health departments to conduct the assessments. The program is being implemented in a phased approach with a goal for full implementation across all 45 local health departments in Michigan by 2025.

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

Yes, beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

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

The assessment should be done prior to starting school but not earlier than 6 months before the start of school. MDHHS does allow local health department screeners to conduct in-school screenings on

kindergarteners up until May 31st of the kindergarten year; this provides an opportunity for children to receive a no-cost assessment if they did not have it done prior to starting school.

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

The dental assessments can be done at a private dental office, through the local health department or at a pre-enrollment event (e.g. Roundups, registration events) where dental assessments are offered. There is no cost for the assessment if it is done by the local health department.

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

Schools should include information about the dental assessments and the [KOHA Assessment form \(MDHHS-6067\)](#) in their school registration packets. Schools should use their distribution channels (e.g. parent letters, social media) to promote the assessments and raise awareness of the importance of good oral health. Schools should consider working with the [local health department](#) to offer dental assessments at pre-enrollment events. Schools are responsible for keeping a record of assessment in a child's school health record.

- ***How can we help parents 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?***

Schools are required to submit school dental assessment data to MDHHS by November 1st of each year. This requirement will begin in the 2024-2025 school year. Instructions for school district reporting of data will be announced once the reporting mechanism is implemented. There is no reporting due for the 2023-2024 school year.

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