

# What You Should Know about Michigan's Revised Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Law

By Michele Kawabe, MPH, RD, CDCES

**P**ublic Act 316 of 2023 was recently enacted, which significantly changed Michigan's original oral health assessment law. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, all children in Michigan enrolling into their first year of school are required to have an oral health assessment (a dental screening) prior to starting school; these assessments were previously optional. The Michigan Dental Association supported this revision to the law

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is required by law to establish and maintain a statewide Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment program (KOHA) to provide the dental assessments at no cost to families. Similar to Michigan's hearing and vision screening programs, the dental assessment program is carried out at the local level through local health departments. The program is currently in Phase Two of a three-year phased implementation and is operating within 27 of the state's 45 local health

departments; the goal for full implementation within all 45 health departments is 2025.

While the majority of the dental assessments will likely be done by local health departments, this new requirement may impact dental offices. Most notably, offices may see an uptick in children referred to the practice for treatment as a result of receiving a KOHA assessment. There also are also provisions in the law that allow dental offices to complete the KOHA assessment. Providing the assessments will not alter usual office protocols for new or existing patients. The only additional part of the visit would be completion of the required KOHA Assessment Form (MDHHS-6067). The completed, signed form should be given to the parent to return to the school. Either a dental examination or a dental assessment done within six months of starting school will meet KOHA requirements. A dentist, dental therapist, or registered dental hygienist can provide the service within their

scope of practice.

Following are answers to frequently asked questions about Michigan's oral health assessment law and the KOHA program.

## **Why was the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program put into place?**

Although fully preventable with access to care and good oral hygiene, tooth decay remains a significant public health concern. Nationally, 23% of 2-to-5 year-olds have cavities; that rate increases to more than 50% by age 8.<sup>1</sup> Here in Michigan, almost half of Head Start children have tooth decay, and close to one-third have untreated decay.<sup>2</sup> To improve the oral health of Michigan children and increase school readiness, Public Act 261 of 2020 was enacted to ensure that children enrolling into their first year of school have the opportunity receive an oral health assessment prior to starting school. Then, with the signing of

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Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, all children in Michigan enrolling into their first year of school are required to have an oral health assessment prior to starting school.

Here's the background, along with some frequently asked questions about this new requirement.



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Public Act 316 in late 2023, this recommendation became a requirement for kindergarten entry. Dental assessments can identify untreated dental disease and refer children for needed

care, connect families to safety net resources, and provide education to children and families about the importance of good oral health.

**Are the dental assessments required?**

Yes. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, the dental assessments

are required for entry into kindergarten, as are hearing and vision screenings.

**Who does the assessments?**

MDHHS is required by law to establish and maintain a statewide oral health assessment program to provide the dental assessments at no cost to families. Local health departments are funded by MDHHS to conduct the assessments and administer the program at the local level. While the majority of the assessments will likely be done by the health departments, they can be done within a private dental office if a parent chooses. Regardless of where the service is provided, it must be done by a licensed dentist, dental therapist, or registered dental hygienist.

**Where can I get a copy of the KOHA Assessment Form?**

The parent will likely bring the form to your office for completion. However, it can be downloaded directly from the MDHHS KOHA website. Go to [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs) and search for Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program.

**On the form, it asks if the child had an exam or an assessment. Which should I choose?**

A dental exam is completed by a dentist or dental therapist; a dental assessment is completed by a registered dental hygienist.

**If I complete the exam and KOHA Assessment Form for a student who is not my patient, are they now a patient of record of my dental practice?**

Where the assessment is completed and by whom will determine if the child is a patient of record of the dental office. If the assessment is provided in a dental office, then the child is a patient of record of the dental office. Some local health departments may ask dental professionals in the community to as-

**State of Michigan Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Form**

**MDHHS-6067, KINDERGARTEN ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT**  
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)  
(New 8-23)

**SECTION 1 – STUDENT INFORMATION**

Child's Name (Last, First, Middle)	Date of Birth
Address (Number, Street, City, Zip Code)	Home/Cell Phone Number
Parent/Guardian Name (Last, First, Middle)	Parent/Guardian Email
School Name	

**SECTION 2 – DENTAL EXAM OR ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**  
(Licensed dental professional must complete this section)

Date of Service	Type of Service <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Exam <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Assessment
Findings (Check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> No findings <input type="checkbox"/> Treated decay <input type="checkbox"/> Untreated decay	Recommendations (Check <b>one</b> ) <input type="checkbox"/> Routine care <input type="checkbox"/> Referral for dental treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Referral for urgent dental care
Provider Type (Check <b>one</b> ) <input type="checkbox"/> Dentist <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Therapist <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Hygienist	Provider Signature
Provider Name (Print)	Agency/Local Health Department
Additional Comments	

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MDHHS-6067 (New. 8-23)

**Oral Health Assessment form** – To download this form, visit [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) and search for Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment Program.



sist with the KOHA program and provide assessments at school registration events, health fairs, or some other type of community event. If the assessment occurs during such an event on behalf of the health department, it is the responsibility of the health department to provide information, referral, and follow-up.

**Dental providers play an integral role and are essential to the overarching goal of improving the oral health of Michigan's children and treating unmet dental needs.**

**Will I be reimbursed for performing a KOHA assessment in my office?**

Potentially. Assessments, periodic exams, and comprehensive exams are services reimbursable by Medicaid. Coverage of these services by non-Medicaid insurers varies.

**How is MDHHS tracking the data?**

An MDHHS KOHA database has been launched, which is used to re-

cord assessment results. Dental offices will eventually have access to this database and training on its use once its use by health departments is fully operational. The KOHA database serves as MDHHS' primary source of objective programmatic data and facilitates data reporting by schools, which is required by law.

Dental providers play an integral role in KOHA and are essential to the overarching goal of improving the oral health of Michigan's children. Beyond providing kindergarten dental assessments in the office setting, the collaboration of dental offices in accepting referrals and providing treatment is a critical link in the effective system of screening, referral, and treatment of children with unmet dental needs that Michigan is building.

More information along with infographics and other program materials can be found on the MDHHS KOHA website. ●

**References**

1. Krol DM, Whelan K; AAP Section on Oral Health. Maintaining and improving the oral health of young children. *Pediatrics*. 2023;151(1):e2022060417.
2. Phipps, K. MI head start smiles: the oral health of michigan's head start children. ASTDD. 2022. At: michigan-head-start-2021-2022.pdf (astdd.org)

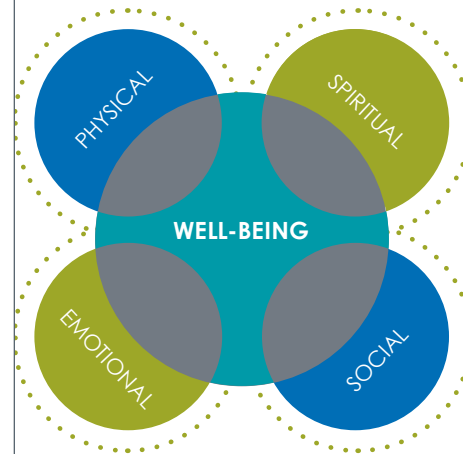
**About the Author**

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