



Guidance & Resources for Conducting Give Kids A Smile During COVID-19

ADA®

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I. Introduction & Overview

This document contains guidance and resources to assist Give Kids A Smile (“GKAS”) program coordinators when considering whether to plan a GKAS event during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

As program coordinators, you should, first and foremost, seek the guidance of [state and local health officials](#) to determine whether there are local ordinances constraining an event like GKAS in your area, (for example – limits on the number of people in a facility). Coordinators should also consider collaborating with their [state/local dental association](#) for additional advice, resources and services to support their efforts.

This document is categorized by the variety of settings in which GKAS events most often take place. The information provided within each category is for general reference only and not intended to be comprehensive or specific to your area. As noted above, it is imperative to work in collaboration with state and local health officials and be familiar with relevant government mandates and guidance as they pertain to [dental](#), [school](#) and/or [community settings and public gatherings](#).

The ADA has also developed a free comprehensive [toolkit](#) with interim guidance that recommends measures to take to help protect patients, staff and dentists. The toolkit is available for your use and includes: a sample letter to patients; guidance on pre-appointment screening; in-office patient registration procedures; reception area preparation strategies; chairside checklist; staff protection strategies, and a supplies shopping list. As an ADA GKAS program coordinator, you are welcome to access these resources.

We look forward to equipping GKAS coordinators to plan a safe event for volunteers, children and parents/caregivers. As in past years, GKAS will be celebrated nationally on the first Friday in February (2/4/2022) during National Children’s Dental Health Month. GKAS coordinators are encouraged to hold their GKAS events during a time that works best for their area. Events do not have to take place in February. They can occur in the spring, summer, or even early fall. We have every confidence that this year will be another successful year, delivering positive oral health outcomes for our communities.

Please note, all efforts are being made by our sponsors to supply the usual oral health products for the donated GKAS product kits. However, it is likely that we will not be able to provide gloves, as they may not be accessible due to the demand resulting from the pandemic. Therefore, please make sure that you take this into account when planning your GKAS events.



II. GKAS Dental Office or Clinic Event

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things about our day-to-day lives, including dental appointments. The health and safety of your patients, staff and volunteers is of the utmost importance. The information below is intended to provide guidance to you in preparing for your GKAS event in a dental office or clinic, and how to address questions and concerns from staff, volunteers and parents/caregivers of GKAS children. As mentioned in the section above, coordinators should be familiar with relevant government mandates and guidance as they pertain to [dental settings](#) as well as the [ADA's COVID-19 Center for Dentists](#).

BEFORE YOUR EVENT:

- Screen your staff, and any additional volunteers that will be helping with your event prior to the start of the GKAS day. Details on staff screening are in the [ADA Return to Work Interim Guidance toolkit](#).
- Call parents/caregivers to make sure child is healthy. Ask health-related questions before the scheduled visit. (See the [toolkit](#) for recommended questions to use when screening patients.)
- To limit the number of people in the waiting room, schedule appointments far enough apart, and ask that parents/caregivers arrive on schedule.
- Ask parents/caretakers to limit the number of people they bring with them or allow older children to go into the office without a parent/caregiver.

DURING YOUR GKAS APPOINTMENTS:

- Require that staff, volunteers, parents/caregivers, patients and others wear a face mask in your office, and distance themselves 6 feet apart if possible.
- Have the dental team take the temperature of those entering your office, and repeat the health questions asked before the appointment.
- No high-touch items like toys, magazines, or books should be in the waiting room.
- Additional protective equipment worn by the dental team will include face masks, plastic face shields, goggles and surgical gowns.
- Ensure that additional cleaning and sanitation measures are done after each child leaves to prepare for the next. For more information visit [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

AFTER YOUR GKAS APPOINTMENTS:

- Be sure that all non-dental staff team volunteers, and parents/caregivers know that if they or their children start to experience symptoms of COVID-19 within 2 days following their visit to your office, they should call to alert the office staff so those who came in contact may be tested.
- Coordinators should make every effort to provide continuity of care resources to those in attendance, especially parents/caregivers of children that require additional oral health services.



III. GKAS Dental School Event

GKAS coordinators planning to hold a GKAS event at a dental school should consult with the dental school dean and other administrative faculty and staff in order to request the necessary approvals to hold the event. Coordinators will need to abide by all COVID-19 protocols that are currently in place at the school and continue to monitor those as they may change as the pandemic evolves.

In addition, coordinators may want to visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19, [Guidance for Dental Settings](#), which may include guidance applicable to your dental school event.

Below are a couple of additional suggestions when planning an event in this particular setting:

- Onsite exams: Consider offering onsite exams by appointment only to ensure the size of the gathering is appropriate.
 - a. COVID prescreening of child and caregiver the day before child's appointment.
 - b. Temperature checks upon arrival.
 - c. Follow the Before Your Event, During Your GKAS Appointments and After Your GKAS Appointments guidance listed in the above GKAS Dental Office or Clinical Event section.
- Two day event:
 - a. 1st day, non-aerosol generating procedures only
 - b. 2nd day, aerosol generating procedures (follow-up care for urgent issues)

Coordinators should make every effort to provide continuity of care resources to those in attendance, especially parents/caregivers of children that require additional oral health services.

IV. GKAS Community Access to Care Event

GKAS coordinators planning to hold a large-scale GKAS event in a community setting such as a school gymnasium, church, or arena should not only consult with the appropriate site director/administrator but should also collaborate with [state and local health officials](#) in order to determine whether and how to best implement the event while protecting all individuals involved and preventing the spread of COVID-19. Below are links to other important resources that may provide assistance when considering the planning of a large-scale event:

- [ADA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Center for Dentists](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (COVID-19) [Community, Work, and School](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (COVID-19) Community, Work and School, [Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#) (this section specifically addresses environmental mitigation tactics)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (COVID-19) [Schools and Child Care Programs](#)



V. GKAS Local Preschool or Elementary School

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of when we can return to "normal," we know that you may be unsure at this time what school-based services you will be able to provide, as partial or complete school shut downs may be in effect. Reliable prediction for the state of local schools in February and the months beyond is not possible.

If you are planning a school-based event, we recommend that you follow the guidelines and restrictions outlined by your state and local school district. We also recommend you visit the COVID-19 resources and guidance documents available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Below are links to two CDC resources specific to school based settings:

- The [Schools and Child Care Programs](#) webpage covers an array of helpful resources for school and program administrators who are operating or considering to operate schools during COVID-19.
- The [Considerations for School Sealant Programs during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#) is a useful resource intended to aid oral health programs that conduct SSPs, dental health personnel (DHCP) who provide direct oral health services, and school administrators as they prepare to implement SSPs during the pandemic, while protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of students, teachers, staff, and DHCP

In addition, coordinators may want to reach out to their [State Oral Health Program](#) to discuss alternative venues and/or methods for conducting GKAS events for local preschool or elementary school children in need of oral health services. The [National Network for Oral Health Access](#) (NNOHA) continues to post resources and tools on their website that may be of assistance as you plan your event.



VI. GKAS Virtual/Remote Dental Education Event

With children and families now having to take part in virtual learning, hundreds of thousands of children from low-income families are dealing with another hidden consequence of closed schools — no access to dental care.

As you are aware, school-based oral health programs have become an important way to connect students from low-income families with oral health care and education.

The online oral health resources listed below are intended to assist you in delivering oral health care education remotely. These resources can also be shared with school administrators and faculty.

Coordinators should also consider connecting with their local [school nurses](#). School nurses are often a stellar resource for bridging health care and education for the children they serve. They are on the front lines and will likely know the children who are most in need of oral health services.

Video

[Colgate Bright Smiles Bright Futures “Adventures of the Molar System”](#)

Presentations and Education Resources

[ADA Mouth Healthy Lesson Plans & Presentations](#)

Colgate Bright Smiles Bright Futures Teacher’s Guide (*coming soon*)

[The Office of Head Start – Brush Up on Oral Health Tip Sheets](#)

Activity Sheets / Brushing Calendar

[ADA Mouth Healthy Activity Sheets](#)

[ADA National Children’s Dental Health Month Resources](#)

[National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center](#)



VII. GKAS – Alternative Event Options

The global pandemic is forcing and inspiring a creative approach to delivering all kinds of much-needed services, including dental care. We encourage GKAS coordinators to reimagine what an event may look like in their area this year. Below are a few ideas that you may consider—some of which can be done solo and others which would leverage the resources of other members of your community.

- Virtual Screening/Teledentistry (where possible): Virtual screening combined with oral health education (include nutrition/health eating habits eruption patterns, and preliminary charting of suspected decay). Schedule follow-up visits for a full exam, x-rays, etc.

Additional information regarding virtual visits:

[NNOHA Teledentistry Resources](#)

- Medical Collaborative GKAS Event: Partner with a medical provider to do hearing, vision screenings, and flu shots during the GKAS event so that the families have multiple issues addressed. This will minimize virus exposure and missed online learning if multiple weekday appointments would otherwise be required. Coordinators may consider collaborating with [local pediatricians](#) to provide oral health services during appointments. Well-child visits usually start a few days after children are born and continue until they are teenagers.
- Food Banks: Possibly partner with organizations that distribute food so that families in need may pick up food donations and receive oral health screening at the same time.
- Mobile GKAS: Partner with local schools, Head Start locations, homeless shelters, group homes, etc. and have a mobile GKAS for families that may feel more comfortable coming to these community institutions as opposed to a medical/dental facility.
- Corporate / Managed Care Organization: Partner with corporations or managed care organizations and reach out to their members who have unmet dental care needs.
- Drive-by GKAS: Parents or caregivers pull up to an outdoor screening location for oral health screenings and education. Provide product kits containing product that participants may use until a clinical dental exam may take place.



VIII. Liability and Risk Management

As with any access program, GKAS raises legal, insurance and risk management considerations. The good news is that these considerations can be managed with thoughtful planning. Coordinators should review the GKAS Legal, Insurance and [Risk Management](#) Considerations Guide, which discusses several key issues, along with some ways you might wish to address them.

The [ADA's Guidelines for Practice Success – Managing Professional Risks](#) is also a useful resource for identifying risk.

For information specific to COVID-19, coordinators may visit the ADA's [COVID-19 Practice Resources](#) webpage for assistance with navigating the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic. The wide range of topics covered include a step-by-step process for assessing COVID-19 hazards (including a color-coded checklist to assess potential for reducing risk) and practical tips for how to handle conversations with patients who refuse to wear a face mask. Coordinators may want to bookmark the COVID-19 Practice Resources homepage and return to it regularly for updates, since the ADA continues to develop and post new materials as the pandemic evolves.



IX. Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What if COVID-19 starts to escalate in fall/winter and there is another shut down?

- A. We would encourage you to build in the necessary flexibility to reschedule, cancel, or provide an alternative event if your original was scheduled in the winter or early spring. Again, it is important to consult with [state and local health officials](#) to determine if a GKAS event is appropriate and if so, how can it be safely conducted.

Q. Do I have to conduct my GKAS event during the month of February?

- B. No, events do not have to take place in February. GKAS will be celebrated nationally on the first Friday in February (2/4/2022) during National Children's Dental Health Month. GKAS coordinators are encouraged to hold their GKAS events during a time when it makes most sense for their community. Events can take place any time of the year.

Q. What do I need to do if I have to reschedule or cancel my event?

- A. If you have to reschedule or cancel your event, please log into the GKAS system to update your planned event date. You may also contact us at gkas@ada.org to inform us of your cancelation.

Q. What should I do with the donated GKAS product supplies if I'm unable to hold my event?

- A. If you cannot use the donated product for your GKAS event, please consider alternative ways to use the product for a charitable cause. An example of this would be to contact a medical provider that provides "well baby" visits and provide oral health education along with the GKAS goody bags to the parents/caregivers.

Q. How and why should I report my actual event data?

- A. It is important to provide your actual GKAS event data following your event and to report the names of the dentists that volunteer for your event so that we may gather accurate statistics for GKAS nationwide, and to recognize the dentists who participate. Go to: gkas.ada.org/login.

Q. Does the ADA have information on how to practice ethically during COVID-19?

- A. Please refer to the following guidance: [Guidance on Continuing to Practice Ethically during COVID-19](#)

Q. For questions or concerns, who should I contact at the ADA?

- A. Please contact the Give Kids A Smile team at gkas@ada.org.



X. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gross health inequities in our society, and the ADA remains committed to addressing these disparities through GKAS and other initiatives. This pandemic has resulted in delays in dental care for many children.

- The spring [report](#) from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services concludes the pandemic is harming the long-term health of children from low-income families. This includes a 69% decline in dental services between March and May 2020 compared with the previous year.
- School-based oral health programs are a primary access point of care and are in jeopardy with remote learning. Half of all children who received dental care in schools did not see a dentist in the prior year.
- According to a recent commentary in the journal, [Preventing Chronic Disease](#), there is an increased need for prevention and access for populations who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The pandemic offers the dental community an opportunity to focus more heavily on prevention and provision of dental care using nonaerosol generating e procedures.

Now, more than ever, we must work together to ensure oral health services are available and accessible to those most in need. We must do our best to remain optimistic and creative in our approach to providing these services as the GKAS program in these trying times.

On behalf of the ADA, we **thank you** for your willingness and commitment to helping those in need.