

County of San Diego

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

# Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment

Resource Guide



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# Introduction

## Purpose

State law requires that children have a dental checkup by May 31 of their first year in school. The County Oral Health Program developed this resource guide to provide information about the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) requirement to school staff. The purpose of this guide is to share resources that are useful and represent current practice.

This Resource Guide explains:

- California state requirements
- Reporting process and timeline
- Frequently asked questions
- Resources and contacts

## *Live Well San Diego*

Addressing the oral health needs of communities aligns with *Live Well San Diego*. *Live Well San Diego* is a regional vision adopted by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors in 2010 that aligns the efforts of County government, community partners, and individuals to help all San Diego County residents be healthy, safe, and thriving. The vision includes three components: Building Better Health, adopted on July 13, 2010, focuses on improving the health of residents and supporting healthy choices; Living Safely, adopted on October 9, 2012, focuses on protecting residents from crime and abuse, making neighborhoods safe, and supporting resilient communities; and, Thriving, adopted on October 21, 2014, focuses on cultivating opportunities for all people to grow, connect, and enjoy the highest quality of life.

Districts and schools are important partners and play an active role in establishing policies and promoting practices that improve student health and well-being.

# Overview

## The Problem

Tooth decay is the most chronic yet preventable healthcare need among California's children. According to the California Department of Education, dental problems caused 869,202 school days missed in 2022, which costs school districts about \$60 million in average daily attendance funding. More than half of California kindergarteners have experienced tooth decay, and by third grade, this number rises to over 70 percent. If left untreated, tooth decay affects children's academic performance, social-emotional development, sleep, and nutrition.

## California State Requirements

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA) requirement was passed into law under the *Education Code* Section 49452.8 in 2005 by Assembly Bill 1433 (AB 1433). The requirement is one way schools can support children's school readiness and success by identifying children suffering from untreated dental disease and helping parents establish a dental home. The law was updated with Senate Bill 379 (SB 379) in 2017 to allow schools to use passive consent at oral health assessment school events and in 2024 with Assembly Bill 2630 (AB 2630) to include Transitional Kindergarteners (TKers). The goal of these policies is to raise awareness on the importance of oral health and help connect children to a regular source of dental care.

To learn more about the KOHA requirements, see the links below:

- For AB 1433, visit [bit.ly/ab-1433](https://bit.ly/ab-1433)
- For SB 379, visit [bit.ly/sb-379](https://bit.ly/sb-379)
- For AB 2630, visit [bit.ly/4hfhpAd](https://bit.ly/4hfhpAd)

## Your Role Can Make a Difference

Oral health is an integral part of a child’s overall health. Schools play an active role in reducing dental disease in our children through raising awareness of the importance of oral health and helping connect children to a dental home. Here are ways your school can make a difference:

<b>PARTNER</b>	<b>PROMOTE</b>	<b>EDUCATE</b>	<b>PROVIDE</b>
Partner with organizations to create a comprehensive approach to oral health.	Promote completion of an oral health assessment for children entering school.	Educate students, parents, and staff about the importance of oral health.	Provide preventive services at your school and refer children for dental care.

## Required Process and Timeline

Schools are required to distribute the KOHA form to parents who are registering their child in public school for the first time.

- This includes kindergarteners and first year first graders.
- Starting in the 2025-2026 school year, TK will be considered a student’s first year in school. TK students will be part of the KOHA requirement.
- For a two-year kindergarten program, submitting proof of an oral health assessment is only required once.

Each year schools are to promote and collect forms by May 31<sup>st</sup> and are responsible to report totals to their district by June 15<sup>th</sup> (See Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Process and Timeline**

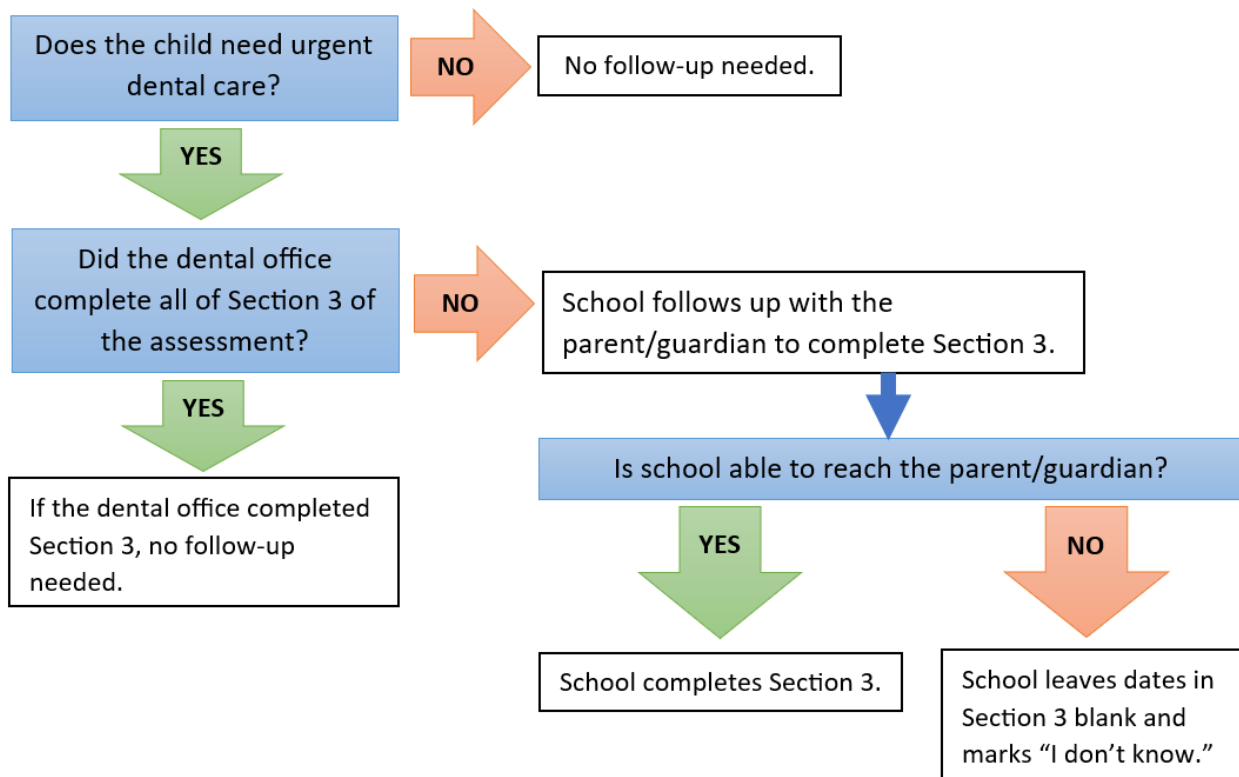
ROLE OF SCHOOL HEALTH STAFF	
<b>Registration – Start of school year</b>	Distribute KOHA forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KOHA Assessment (English)</li> <li>• KOHA Assessment (Spanish)</li> </ul> If requested, waivers can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiver of KOHA Requirement (English)</li> <li>• Waiver of KOHA Requirement (Spanish)</li> </ul>
<b>During the school year</b>	Encourage completion of the KOHA form. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send at least 3 reminders to parents/guardians.</li> <li>• Collect completed KOHA and Waiver forms.</li> <li>• Follow up with children who have urgent dental needs.</li> </ul>
<b>May 31</b>	Last day to collect completed KOHA and Waiver forms.
<b>June 15</b>	Compile and submit your school's KOHA data to your school district. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the KOHA School Data Entry Tool (updated 2024).</li> <li>• This tool contains data quality checks to help ensure all required data is reported accurately.</li> </ul>
ROLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT	
<b>July 1</b>	Submit collected information to San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the KOHA District Summary Tool (updated 2024).</li> </ul>
ROLE OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION (SDCOE)	
<b>July 15</b>	Submit collected data to the County of San Diego Oral Health Program.



**Section 3: Follow-up to Urgent Care (Filled out by entity responsible for follow up)**

Parent notified that child has urgent dental care need on:	MM – DD – YYYY
A follow-up appointment for this child has been scheduled for:	MM – DD – YYYY
Did child receive needed treatment?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No (If no, entity responsible for follow-up will be encouraged to check back in with parent) <input type="radio"/> I don't know

**Follow-up process for children assessed at a dental office**



Schools providing onsite screenings should discuss a process to complete the KOHA form Section 3 with the dental provider conducting the screenings and any other involved partners, including defining roles for follow-up. For support, please contact the County of San Diego Oral Health Program.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA)?

The KOHA ensures all children are healthy and ready for school. Similar to school screenings for vision and hearing, California laws [AB 1433](#) (2005) and [AB 2630](#) (2024) require children receive an oral health assessment as part of school entry by their first year of school in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, or first grade. The KOHA helps identify children who need dental care and helps to avoid future dental problems and missed school days.

### Where can I find the KOHA forms and other reporting tools?

The KOHA forms, tools, and Resource Guide can be found on the [County of San Diego Oral Health Program website](#).

### Is the KOHA form available in other languages besides English and Spanish?

As other languages become available, updated versions will be included in the [County of San Diego Oral Health Program website](#).

### Can I request printed forms from the County of San Diego Oral Health Program?

You may submit a request for [printed forms](#), while supplies last.

### How can schools help promote KOHA and oral health?

School districts and schools can help promote KOHA by:

- **Partner:** No one can do it alone. Partner with organizations to support a comprehensive approach for your community.
- **Promote:** Encourage completion of the KOHA form. Spread the word to your families about on-site screenings, preventive services, and other oral health activities happening in your school.
- **Educate:** Provide education to everyone! This includes staff, teachers, families, and students. Building health habits for a lifetime benefits us all.
- **Provide:** Link families to a dental home, provide resources, and offer preventive services as needed.

Get creative! For more tips, ideas, and promising practices, visit [California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center \(COHTAC\)](#).

## What is the difference between an Oral Health Assessment and a Dental Exam?

An oral health assessment is a visual check of the teeth and surrounding tissues of the mouth to see if there are any obvious signs of tooth decay. No X-rays are needed for an assessment.

A dental exam is a thorough oral examination performed by a licensed dentist that may include dental X-rays. This could lead to diagnosis of conditions and treatment.

An assessment does not take the place of a dental exam. A dental exam is recommended annually.

## Is there a difference between passive and active consent forms?

Yes, there is a difference.

**Passive consent** requires parents to sign and return a form if they do not want their child to receive an assessment. If no form is returned, the child will receive an assessment.

**Active consent** requires parents to sign and return a form if they do want their child to receive an assessment. If no form is returned, the child will not receive an assessment.

## What if a child does not have a dental home or his/her family cannot afford an oral health assessment?

If a child has Medi-Cal, this includes Medi-Cal Dental coverage. For more information, visit [the Medi-Cal for Kids & Teens webpage](#) or [Smile, California](#).

## Where do charter schools report the KOHA information?

Charter schools may submit their KOHA information to either of the below:

- a) their school district; or
- b) the San Diego County Office of Education.

Please contact the County of San Diego Oral Health Program if you have any questions about reporting KOHA data for your charter school or are interested in submitting your charter school's KOHA data directly into the System for California Oral Health Reporting (SCOHR).

## Resources

California Department of Education	<a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov">www.cde.ca.gov</a>
System for California Oral Health Reporting (SCOHR)	<a href="https://ab1433.org/home/overview">https://ab1433.org/home/overview</a>
California Oral Health Technical Assistance Center	<a href="https://oralhealthsupport.ucsf.edu/our-programs/school-programs/KOHA">https://oralhealthsupport.ucsf.edu/our-programs/school-programs/KOHA</a>
Medi-Cal Kids & Teens	<a href="https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/kidsandteens">https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/kidsandteens</a>
Smile, California	<a href="http://www.smilecalifornia.org">www.smilecalifornia.org</a>
County of San Diego Oral Health Program	<a href="https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhs_a/programs/phs/dental_health_initiative_share_the_care.html">https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhs_a/programs/phs/dental_health_initiative_share_the_care.html</a>
Assembly Bill 1433	<a href="http://bit.ly/ab-1433">bit.ly/ab-1433</a>
Senate Bill 379	<a href="http://bit.ly/sb-379">bit.ly/sb-379</a>
Assembly Bill 2630	<a href="http://bit.ly/4hfhpAd">bit.ly/4hfhpAd</a>

## Contacts

For questions regarding KOHA requirements or reporting, please contact:



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Example of Completed KOHA School Data Entry Tool

**Example Scenario:** Elementary A has 38 kindergarteners and two first graders enrolled in school for the first time. School health staff collected a total of 36 forms, compiled the information, and submitted this tool as an Excel® file to Central Unified School District.

- 34 students submitted a completed oral health assessment form.
- 2 students submitted signed waivers of the KOHA requirement.
- 4 students did not return an assessment or waiver form.

KINDERGARTEN ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT - SCHOOL DATA REPORTING				
School District		Central Unified School District		
School Name		Elementary A		
School Year		2024-2025		
School Data Entry completed by: Name				
Phone Number				
Email				
Item	Description	Numbers	Comments	Data Checks
A	# of TK enrolled		Include TK starting school year 2025-2026. Starting school year 2025-2026: If none, please enter '0', do not leave blank	
B	# of Kindergarteners enrolled if first year in public school	38		No discrepancy
C	# of first graders enrolled if first year in public school	2		
D	# of students at the school eligible for the assessment	40	This number autopopulates based on response to items A-C	
E	# of students who <b>did not submit</b> either the oral health assessment form or a waiver	4		
F	# of students who submitted a <b>completed Oral Health Assessment Form signed by a dental professional</b>	34		
G	# of students who submitted a <b>waiver signed by a parent/guardian</b>	2		

Of the 2 waivers collected, both selected the reason 'I do not believe my child would benefit from an assessment'.

WAIVER OF ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT: Section 2		
H	# of waivers marked "Cannot find a dental office that will take my child's dental insurance plan"	0
I	# of waivers marked "I cannot afford a dental check-up for my child"	0
J	# of waivers marked "I cannot find the time to get to a dentist"	0
K	# of waivers marked "I cannot get to a dentist easily"	0
L	# of waivers marked "I do not believe my child would benefit from an assessment"	2
M	# of waivers marked "Other"	0

Of the 34 assessments collected:

- 5 students had untreated decay and needed urgent care.
- 20 students had caries experience.
- Of the 5 students needing urgent care, all had parents/guardians notified and follow-up appointments scheduled. At the time follow-up was conducted, receipt of treatment for all 5 students was unknown.

ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT FORM: Sections 2 and 3		
N	# of forms marked "Yes" for <b>untreated decay</b>	5
O	# of forms marked "Yes" for <b>caries experience</b>	20
P	# of forms marked "No obvious problem"	15
Q	# of forms marked "Early dental care recommended"	14
R	# of forms marked "Urgent care needed"	5
S	# of forms with dates for when parent/guardian was notified child had urgent dental care need	5
T	# of forms with dates for follow up appointment scheduled	5
U	# of forms marked "Yes" for Child received needed treatment	0
V	# of forms marked "No" for Child received needed treatment	0
W	# of forms marked " <b>I don't know</b> " for Child received needed treatment	5
ON-SITE DENTAL SCREENING OPT OUT LETTER		
X	# of signed on-site dental screening opt out letters	0

## Appendix 2: Example of Completed KOHA District Summary Tool

**Example Scenario:** Of five elementary schools in Central Unified School District, two submitted KOHA data using the KOHA School Data Entry Tool to the school district. The nurse at the district office reviewed the submitted KOHA School Data Entry Tools for any discrepancies and notes. The district nurse then compiled the collected information using the KOHA District Summary Tool and submitted the Excel® file to the San Diego County Office of Education.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	<b>Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA): District Summary Tool (updated 2024)</b>							
2	District Name	School Name	# of students at the school eligible for the assessment	# of students who submitted a completed Oral Health Assessment Form signed by a dental professional	# of waivers marked "cannot find a dental office that will take my child's dental insurance plan"	# of waivers marked "I cannot afford a dental check-up for my child"	# of waivers marked "I cannot find the time to get to a dentist"	# of waivers marked "I cannot get to a dentist easily"
3	DISTRICT	SCHOOL	SCOHR_1	SCOHR_2	SCOHR_3	SCOHR_4	SCOHR_5	SCOHR_6
4	Central Unified School District	Elementary A	40	34	0	0	0	0
5	Central Unified School District	Elementary B	50	30	2	2	2	2
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
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16								
17								
18								
19								

<b>Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA): District Summary Tool</b>		
<b>STUDENT COUNT</b>	Number of schools reporting KOHA data	2
	Total reported TK enrolled (Include TK starting school year 2025-2026)	0
	Total reported kindergarteners enrolled (if first year in public school)	83
	Total reported first graders (if first year in public school)	7
	Total students at the school eligible for the assessment	90
	Total reported students who submitted a KOHA form	64
	Total reported students who submitted a waiver of KOHA requirement	12
<b>ORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT</b>	Total reported students who DID NOT submit a KOHA form	14
	Total reported students with 'Yes' for Caries Experience	35
	Total reported students with 'Yes' for Visible Decay Present	15
	Total reported students with 'No obvious problem found'	30
	Total reported students with 'Early Dental Care Recommended'	24
<b>WAIVER OF KOHA REQUIREMENT</b>	Total reported students with 'Urgent Care Needed'	10
	Total reported waivers for 'Unable to find a dental office that will take insurance'	2
	Total reported waivers for 'Cannot afford an oral health screening'	2
	Total reported waivers for 'I cannot find time'	2
	Total reported waivers for 'I cannot get to a dentist easily'	2
	Total reported waivers for 'I do not want my child to receive an oral health screening'	4
<b>FOLLOW UP</b>	Total reported waivers for 'Other reasons child could not get an oral health screening'	0
	# of forms with dates for when parent was notified child had urgent dental care need	10
	# of forms with dates for follow up appointment scheduled	10
	# of forms marked "Yes" for Child received needed treatment	5
	# of forms marked "No" for Child received needed treatment	0
	# of forms marked "I don't know" for Child received needed treatment	5
# of signed on-site dental screening opt out letters	5	