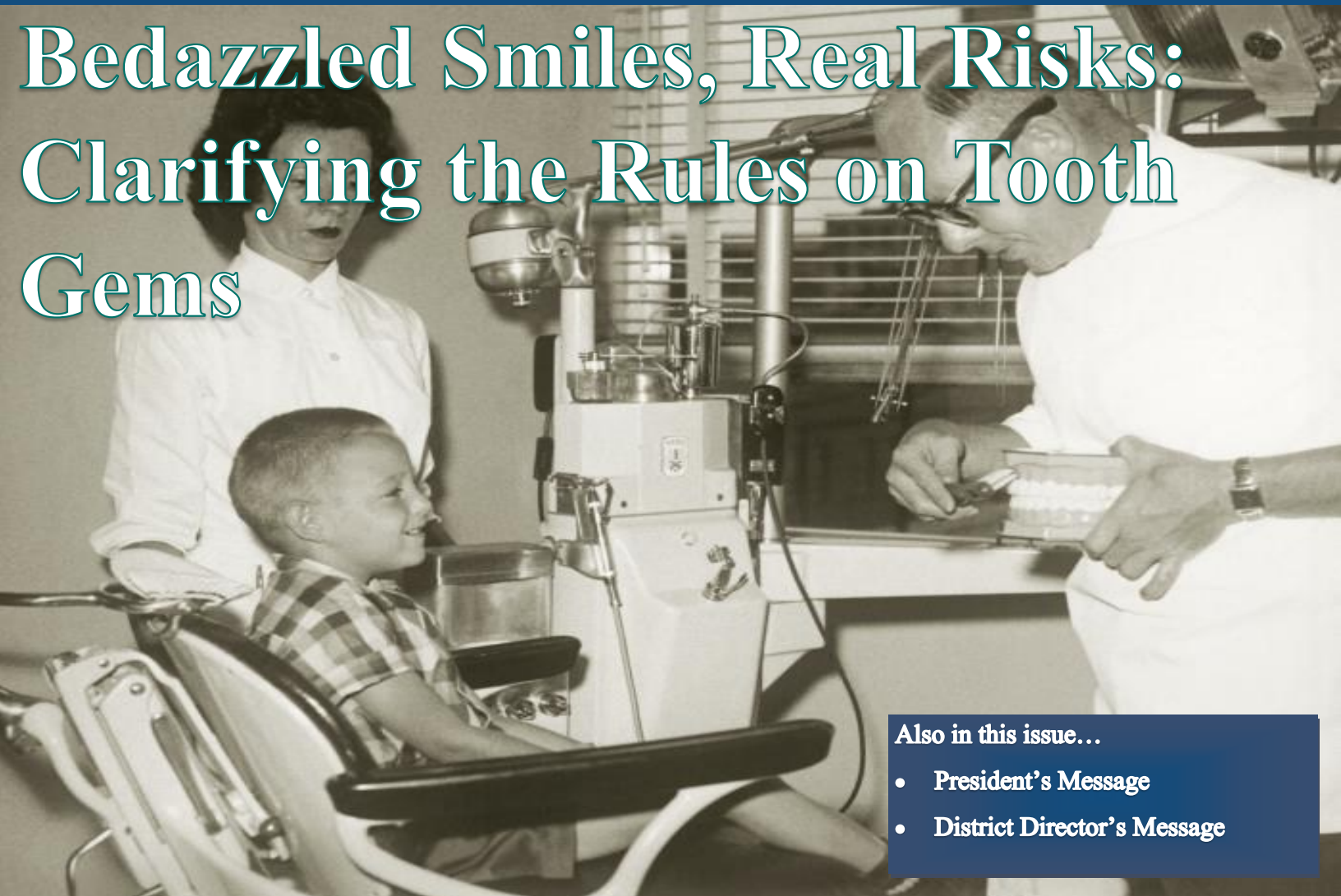


Ohio Journal of
Environmental
Health

4th Quarter 2025

Bedazzled Smiles, Real Risks:
Clarifying the Rules on Tooth
Gems



Also in this issue...

- President's Message
- District Director's Message



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The object and purpose of the Association shall be the betterment of the health and welfare of mankind through the improvement of the environment. This shall be done by sponsoring state and regional meetings and publications, by developing methods of measuring and evaluating achievements in environmental health, the establishment of a central point of reference and education material for the membership, the procurement of cooperation with other agencies and organizations, and such other activities as will lead to the greater efficiency and professional growth of the membership.

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President's Message

Courtney Myers, MPH, REHS
Stark County Health Department

Dear OEHA Members,

Season's greetings to all members of the Ohio Environmental Health Association! As we wrap up another year, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the dedication, professionalism, and passion each of you brings to protecting the health and safety of Ohio's communities. Despite the fast pace of legislative activity throughout 2025, OEHA remained fully engaged. Even during the summer recess, Hicks Partners continued advocating on OEHA's behalf to ensure our priorities stayed at the forefront.



Legislative Update: House Bill 134 – Microenterprise Kitchens

In November 2025, OEHA provided Interested Party testimony before the Ohio House on House Bill 134, which proposes expanding cottage food operations under the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). Representing OEHA, Scott Whittaker emphasized the importance of maintaining strong, consistent food safety protections as part of any expansion.

Key points highlighted in testimony included:

- Limiting high-risk foods,
- Aligning requirements with the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code,
- Requiring basic food safety training, and
- Ensuring appropriate inspection authority within the home.

Following testimony, the House passed HB 134 with a vote of 83–1. The bill now moves to the Ohio Senate. OEHA will continue reviewing any revised language, engaging with lawmakers, and advocating for public health measures.

Legislative Update: House Bill 59 – Environmental Health Credentialing

On November 4, 2025, I provided proponent testimony on House Bill 59 before the House General Government Committee. HB 59 aims to modernize Ohio's environmental health credentialing process to ensure our workforce remains skilled, capable, and prepared to address public health challenges statewide.

OEHA-supported provisions include:

- Expanding the definition of “basic sciences” for certification eligibility to align with NEHA standards and open pathways for more qualified candidates.
- Reducing the training timeframe for Environmental Health Specialists in Training to achieve full credentialing, improving accessibility, and supporting workforce recruitment and retention.
- Extending the timeframe for full certification from four to five years, giving professionals greater flexibility as they balance work, continuing education, and family commitments.

A late amendment—successfully advanced by Tony Brigano from Hicks Partners—removed the “approved by the director” language, which removes ODH's authority over course approvals. The House passed HB 59

unanimously, 87–0. The bill now proceeds to the Ohio Senate, where OEHA will continue monitoring and advocating for best practices in environmental health credentialing.

Recognizing Our Outgoing District Directors

I would like to offer heartfelt thanks to our outgoing District Directors—Emily Speck (Northeast), Van Creasap (Northwest), Rachel Moresea (Southeast), and Alex Dayton (Southwest)—for their exceptional leadership. Thanks to their dedication, along with the hard work of their Planning Committees and Treasurers, each district hosted a successful and engaging conference this year. These events continue to provide meaningful opportunities for professional development, networking, and knowledge-sharing. We are truly grateful for their service and commitment to advancing environmental health across Ohio.

Leadership Course

This fall, OEHA held its second Environmental

Health Leaders Professional Course at Delaware County Public Health. Offered at no cost to OEHA members, this course supports emerging leaders in the field. Special thanks to Carrie Yeager and Luke Jacobs for organizing the event and to the many presenters who generously shared their time and expertise with participants.

A Close on 2025

As the year comes to an end, the Ohio Environmental Health Association wishes all our members a joyful and restful holiday season. Thank you for your outstanding dedication to protecting Ohio’s communities throughout 2025. May your holidays be filled with peace, good health, and time spent with family and friends.

In Service,
Courtney Myers
President, Ohio Environmental Health Association

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Bedazzled Smiles, Real Risks: Clarifying the Rules on Tooth Gems

Sarah Badenhop, REHS
Columbus Public Health
OEHA Body Art Committee Chair

Have you heard about teeth gems? They're small decorative elements adhered to the front surface of a tooth. A tooth gem is usually made of crystal, rhinestone, gold or another type of small metal charm. While the trend has been around for a while, we're seeing a surge in bedazzled smiles here in Ohio.

Because the gems are a form of "body adornment," the service has easily found its way into the body art world. However, if you see this service being offered in a body art establishment, there are some things you need to know:

First, the placement (or removal) of a gem on a tooth is considered the practice of dentistry. The Ohio State Dental Board regulates this service and has made it clear that it should only be conducted by a licensed dentist.

Second, there are risks associated with tooth gems. The wrong binding agent, gem, or technique could cause serious harm. Potential injuries include enamel damage, tooth decay, gum irritation or recession, chipping or cracking, and long-term complications with future dental procedures. These risks reinforce the stance that the tooth gem application should only be conducted by a highly trained dental professional.

Third, the NEHA Body Art Committee has determined that the application of a tooth gem may be a body modification, but it is not body art as defined in the Body Art Model Code; therefore, it does not fall under body art rules. As more states across the country restrict tooth gem application to licensed dental

professionals, a strong consensus is forming regarding the risks associated with the procedure.

Finally, tooth gem kits are easily available to the public. A quick search online reveals DIY kits are as inexpensive as \$9.99. These kits are marketed as "professional" with "safe and easy application," making it appear simple for anyone to apply them.

Displaying a tooth gem is a personal statement – and the body art industry is all about personal statements – which is likely why we see tooth gems popping up in that setting. With kits being affordable and accessible, and artists expanding their services to increase clientele, it is understandable why body art establishments might want to offer this service.

However, unless the body art establishment hires a dentist, they should not be offering tooth gem application. An Enforcement Officer at the Ohio State Dental Board responded to an inquiry with this statement: *"Please feel free to advise the business owner or their staff that unless they want to risk an M1 or Felony for practicing dentistry without a license, they should not offer teeth gems unless they wish to sell the product without touching the client."*

Acknowledgment:

Edited with the assistance of Austin Addison, NEHA Body Art Committee Regulatory Co-Chair, DHSc, REHS, CHES, EHS IV, Georgia Department of Public Health



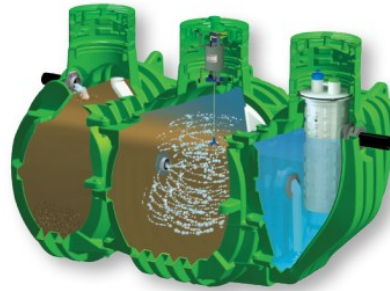
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Featured District Director's Message: Southwest

Alexander Dayton, REHS
Butler County General Health District

Hello everyone! My name is Alexander Dayton, and it has been an honor serving as your 2025 Southwest OEHA District Director.



I was born and raised in Mason, Ohio, and I currently live in Maineville, OH. I graduated from The Ohio State University in 2020 with a degree in biology and began my career in environmental health with the Butler County General Health District (BCGHD). Like many in this field, I didn't enter college expecting to pursue a career in public health. I was initially pre-med but eventually realized that becoming a doctor wasn't the right path for me. I graduated during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and

began applying for lab positions. During my job search, I came across a posting for a Registered Sanitarian. I wasn't familiar with the title at first, but I was familiar with health inspections from my experience working in food service at Kings Island during summers in high school and college. I was fortunate to be hired and I am still with BCGHD five years later.



My career at BCGHD began in the midst of the COVID pandemic. Although I was hired to conduct food, pool, school, and body art inspections, it was several weeks before I even



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saw a standard inspection. Our department was heavily involved in COVID response—handling complaints, coordinating with partners, and planning for vaccination clinics. Once the immediate response period passed, I was finally able to experience the “normal” side of a job in EH.

A few years into my REHS career, I joined the OEHA Southwest District planning committee. This committee is responsible for recruiting speakers, selecting venues, and organizing the annual fall educational conference. I highly encourage everyone reading this to get involved with OEHA. Join a planning committee if you’re interested in shaping our conferences, or a technical committee if you’re passionate

about a specific area of environmental health. Involvement not only looks great on a résumé—it also helps you form valuable connections with REHSs across the state. Members of our committee frequently reach out to each other with questions or for advice on challenges encountered in the field.

In closing, it has been a pleasure serving as the 2025 Southwest District Director. Many thanks to the Southwest District planning committee for helping make this year’s conference a success. If you have any questions or are interested in joining a committee, please feel free to contact me at alexander.dayton@bcohoio.gov

The advertisement features a blue and white color scheme. At the top, the Wastewater Solutions logo consists of a blue water drop icon with three white curved lines below it, followed by the text "WASTEWATER SOLUTIONS" in blue and black. Below the logo, the text "Improving the environment, ONE SYSTEM AT A TIME" is displayed in a large, black, sans-serif font. The central image shows three green hydro-action units, which are cylindrical devices with various internal components visible through cutaway sections. The units are set against a background of splashing water. In the bottom left corner, the "hydro-action" logo is shown in green and blue, with the tagline "green from the ground up" in smaller text. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular NSF logo and the text "ANSI/NSF Standard 40 5 Year Limited Warranty". At the very bottom, the website address "www.wastewatersol.com" is written in a large, black, sans-serif font.



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- **Emergency Response Coordinator**
Brown County Health Department
- **Environmental Health Program Manager**
Greene County Public Health
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Lorain County Public Health
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Warren County Health District
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Clermont County Public Health
- **REHS**
Ashland County Health Department
- **REHS III/Supervisor**
Franklin County Public Health
- **Medical Billing & Credentialing Specialist**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health
- **Human Resources Generalist**
Cuyahoga County Board of Health

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- **AOHC New Employee Training** - March 4, 2026; Delaware, Ohio
- **AOHC LEHDS** - April 14 - 15, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **AOHC Finance for Health Departments** - April 14 - 15, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **OEHA AEC** - April 16-17, 2026; Lewis Center, Ohio
- **Ohio Public Health Conference** - April 27 -29, 2026; Lewis Center, Ohio
- **AOHC Health Commissioner University** - May 11 - 13, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **AOHC New Employee Training** - July 8, 2026; Delaware, Ohio
- **2025 AOHC Fall Conference** - September 21-23, 2026; Dublin, Ohio
- **AOHC New Employee Training** - November 4, 2026; Delaware, Ohio



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