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**June 22, 2020**

**Testimony for KanCare Oversight Committee**

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

Oral Health Kansas is the state-wide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public, so Kansans know that all mouths matter. Thank you for the opportunity to provide information about the Medicaid dental program for the Committee. We have several updates that we felt were pertinent to your oversight of the Medicaid dental program.

**Dental Reimbursement Rates**

As you may recall, the FY2021 Budget passed during the 2020 Legislative Session included a \$3 million All Funds increase for Medicaid dental reimbursement rates. This rate increase adds to last year's similar \$3 million increase, which was the first since 2001. Over the two years, the Legislature appropriated a combined total Medicaid dental rate increase of \$6 million All Funds. Oral Health Kansas worked alongside the Kansas Dental Association and the Division of Health Care Finance to target this rate increase to have the intended impact of expanding our Medicaid dental provider network in Kansas. Similar to last year's rate increase the codes that are most requested and utilized by Medicaid dental providers were targeted for the increase. The policy should be finalized soon with an anticipated start date of August 1. We would like to express our gratitude to the Division of Health Care Finance for their quick work on implementing this increase, because we believe this will make a difference in the KanCare dental provider network.

**Dental Research Studies**

At the February 2020 KanCare Oversight Committee Hearing, Oral Health Kansas shared our plan to request a study from the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute that would estimate the cost and offsets of introducing comprehensive adult Medicaid dental benefits in Kansas. We are excited to announce that our request has been accepted and we anticipate having a final report in Fall 2020. We are also finalizing plans with another state organization to study the number of Kansans who have dental insurance, and we anticipate this report also will be ready in Fall 2020. We look forward to the opportunity to share the outcomes of these studies with the Committee and to having a discussion about the dental needs in the state.

**Teledentistry**

Along with our big picture goals to improve the oral health of Kansas, Oral Health Kansas has been responding to advocacy and resource requests from both consumers and dental providers during the COVID-19 crisis, and teledentistry has remained a theme throughout the requests. Teledentistry allows dental providers to connect with their patients virtually to assess and triage their dental needs. Oral Health Kansas submitted a letter to the Governor and KDHE in March 2020 asking for dental providers to be included in the telehealth Executive Order. Our advocacy led to the Department of Health Care Finance approving a policy that authorized the use of teledentistry through May 1. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas and Delta Dental of Kansas also had similar policies authorizing teledentistry temporarily. We were grateful to all of these insurance agencies for ensuring Kansas residents had access to dental professionals even while dental offices were closed during the pandemic. Unfortunately, all of these authorizations have ended as dental offices began re-opening when the stay at home order was lifted.

712 S. Kansas Ave, Suite 412  
Topeka, KS 66603

785-235-6039 (phone)  
785-233-5564 (fax)  
info@oralhealthkansas.org

[www.oralhealthkansas.org](http://www.oralhealthkansas.org)

However, as we are now beginning to see, COVID-19 is continuing to impact our communities. Oral Health Kansas is committed to ensuring Kansas residents continue to have access to dental care, and we are planning to ask Governor Kelly for authorization of teledentistry as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 crisis. We encourage the members of this Committee to join us in asking Governor Kelly to issue an Executive Order to authorize teledentistry in the state of Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to share important updates that impact the Medicaid dental program. If you have any questions about the information above, please do not hesitate to contact us, Oral Health Kansas is happy to provide assistance to the Committee.

Tanya Dorf Brunner  
Executive Director  
[tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org)

Christi Wells  
Policy Director  
[cwells@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:cwells@oralhealthkansas.org)