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## **KDADS FY 2023 Budget Recommendations August 10, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input about the Kansas Department of Aging and Disabilities Services FY 2023 budget. Oral Health Kansas, Inc. is the statewide consumer oral health 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.

### **Adult Dental Coverage in Kansas**

Access to routine dental care has been largely out of reach for low-income adults for many years. That all changed in FY 2022 when the Kansas Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million to extend KanCare dental coverage to adults. The new funding will provide coverage for fillings and crowns as well as periodontal care (gum disease treatment). These new services are supplemented by the existing dental value-added benefits (VABs) covered by the KanCare managed care organizations. The new funding for adult dental benefits marks the most significant leap forward in our state's coverage of dental care for Kansans who live in poverty, and we know this modest investment will go a long way toward helping people mitigate and manage dental disease, thus improving people's lives and overall health. However, coverage of full and partial dentures remains elusive. Some of the current VABs include coverage for dentures for some of the HCBS waiver populations, but dentures are not available to all the adult populations who need them. VABs also are subject to change, so they are not something KanCare beneficiaries can count on from year to year.

### **Dentures and Partial**

Dentures and partials offer **two major benefits** to adults who experience tooth loss. According to a [report card Oral Health Kansas released earlier this year](#), **nearly a third of older Kansans have lost six or more teeth. The number six is important because once people lose six or more teeth, mouth function deteriorates.**

One such function is the ability to eat a healthy, balanced diet. While inadequate nutrition is in itself detrimental to overall health and wellbeing, many older adults have co-morbidities which can be exacerbated by limiting the ability to eat a healthy diet. An example of such a co-morbidity is diabetes. Eating well is key to achieving diabetic control and therefore, a healthy diet can both increase health for the individual and reduces burgeoning healthcare costs by lowering the risk of costly diabetic complications. Further, a [2018 cross-sectional study](#) showed people without teeth were at increased risk of presenting with high glycemic levels and had higher odds of hyperglycemia (both demonstrating poor diabetic control). The provision of dentures and partials is one of the best ways to help those who have lost natural teeth restore their ability to eat nutritious food and maintain a healthy diet. As of 2021, 11.4% of adult Kansans have been diagnosed with diabetes, amounting to an [estimated cost of \\$2.4 billion dollars annually](#) and, [according to the CDC](#), 61% of annual diabetic spending is for adults aged 65 or over. The high diabetic cost burden paired with high levels of significant tooth loss in this population highlights the need for the provision of a simple way to restore dentition and thus facilitate the maintenance of a healthy diet, namely dentures and partials.

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The **second reason** access to dentures and partials is important is even more simple – **dignity**. According to a [report from the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute](#), nearly 50% of low-income Kansas adults say life in general is less satisfying due to the condition of their mouth and teeth. But we don't need a report to tell us that people who are missing teeth are embarrassed and even avoid smiling. A smile not only makes others happy, but it makes the person smiling happy. Smiling is something everyone should be able to do in order to enjoy basic dignity. When people experience tooth loss, dentures and partials give them their smiles back.

Over the past few years Oral Health Kansas has convened a stakeholder group focused improving access to Medicaid dental care for people with disabilities. One of the barriers that comes up frequently is dentures. Provider and consumer advocates report that dentures are a major need, but access to them is spotty at best. In a recent survey of service coordinators one commented, "It can be difficult to get dentures covered for anyone who is not on the FE waiver." Oral Health Kansas is one of many stakeholders that believes it is time to ensure all people who rely on Medicaid should have access to dentures or partials when they need it.

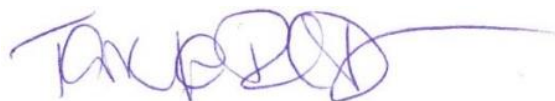
### **Funding Request**

An additional investment in the Medicaid budget will ensure adults who are covered by KanCare are able to access dentures and partials when they need those services. At this writing we are finalizing a firm estimate for the dollar amount needed from the Medicaid Director, and we will share that with KDADS as soon as possible.

We urge the Kansas Department of Disabilities and Aging Services to include coverage for dentures and partials in your FY 2023 budget request. KDADS has been a notable leader in Kansas state government's prioritization of oral health for many years. From 2008 to 2010 comprehensive dental care, including dentures, was included in the PD and FE waivers because of KDADS' leadership in prioritizing overall health. KDADS can continue to lead by making dentures a priority again and ensuring that adults on the HCBS waivers and who live in long-term care settings are able to access dentures and partials to be healthy and ensure dignity and quality of life.

We appreciate the opportunity to share this information with you and thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions and provide additional information.

Sincerely,



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