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Senate Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee February 15, 2024

Chair McGinn and members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony for the Subcommittee. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong oral health by shaping policy and educating the public.

Medicaid Adult Dental Services

This Committee has been a true champion for extending dental care in Medicaid to adults, and it truly is paying off. Thousands of Kansans have accessed much needed and life changing care. And because of last year's investment hundreds of Kansans have been able to get dentures. You are changing lives for the better. One more change is needed in order to make sure the benefits you have invested in will work well. **We ask the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services to include \$4,847,485 All Funds, including \$1,936,813 SGF, in the KDHE budget for FY 2025 to cover dental exams, x-rays, and cleanings for adults in the Kansas Medicaid program.**

The Medicaid dental services for adults the Legislature put into place on July 1, 2022, have now been in effect for just over 18 months. This benefit includes fillings, crowns, and periodontal (gum disease) care. The denture benefit the Legislature championed in 2023 went into effect July 1 and has been in effect for six months. The Legislature's investments are paying off!

- **Utilization:**

We requested data from the Division of Health Care Finance on utilization of all of these benefits in calendar year 2023. Just over 7,500 people received dental care in 2023. The breakdown of which services people accessed is below.

2023 Adult Dental Claims Paid

Unique beneficiaries	7,551
Fillings	60%
Crowns	12%
Periodontal care	10%
Dentures	19%

- **Education:**

Effective implementation of new dental coverage depends on a robust education program. Oral Health Kansas has a webpage dedicated to helping consumers and providers understand the adult dental coverage, including the new denture coverage. FAQs, fliers, videos, and more are available on our [Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits webpage](#). We encourage legislators and community organizations to share this webpage with their networks.

Education for consumers and providers is key to effective implementation of the benefits, and we are eager to work with organizations that would like to learn more.

As we have worked to help consumers and providers understand the Medicaid adult dental benefits, we have learned there is an unforeseen consequence of the way the dental benefit is set up. Kansas is the only state that uses a combination of Medicaid and Value-Added Benefits (VABs) to establish adult dental benefits. The Legislature has invested in extending restorative dental care to adults, but the MCOs have had to cover the most basic preventive dental care – exams, x-rays, and cleanings in their VAB packages. The purpose of a VAB is to offer additional services or incentives that can promote healthy lifestyles and improve health outcomes. A VAB is something extra that will make someone’s life a little better, not a basic service that is core to health care, such as a dental exam and cleaning. When people have access to routine preventive dental care, they are able to catch any problems early and stay healthier. Prevention and early detection of disease are always easier and far less expensive than more complex treatments.

The state of Maryland implemented a Medicaid adult dental benefit about the same time we did in Kansas. Their benefit package includes coverage for exams, x-rays, and cleanings. In the first 11 months of implementation in Maryland, they saw a 23% utilization rate. In 2023, we saw a utilization rate in Kansas of about 4%. The difference is striking, and the confusion about how Kansas' benefit works contributes to the challenges adults covered by Medicaid still face in trying to access dental care.

The proposed basic preventive dental care benefit for adults would include:

- Dental examinations and x-rays
- Basic cleanings
- Oral hygiene counseling
- Nutritional counseling
- Tobacco counseling

Over 20 statewide and local organizations are joining with us in asking for funding to cover basic preventive dental care. They include disabilities advocates and providers, older adult advocates and providers, behavioral health advocates, early childhood advocates, dental clinics, health foundations and local health departments. Following are organizations that have signed onto our advocacy coalition to support this request:

- AcruxKC
- Arcare, Inc.
- ARC of Douglas County
- Central Plains Area Agency on Aging
- Community Care Network of Kansas
- Families Together, Inc./Family to Family Health Center
- Health Forward Foundation
- Hunter Health
- InterHab
- KanCare Advocates Network
- Kansas Action for Children
- Kansas Advocates for Better Care
- Kansas Appleseed
- Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Kansas Dental Association
- Kansas Head Start Association
- LeadingAge Kansas
- NAMI Kansas
- Rawlins County Dental Clinic
- Self-Advocate Coalition of Kansas
- Sunflower Foundation
- United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

KDHE Oral Health Budget

The Governor's Budget Recommendations for KDHE included a \$370,000 increase in the Bureau of Oral Health's budget. We support this recommendation. KDHE has had a CDC oral health grant for the last six years. That grant funds the school dental screening and sealant programs as well as support for community water fluoridation. The grant comes to an end in August of this year, and while the CDC will issue a new RFP for oral health grants, there is not a guarantee that Kansas would receive the grant again. Only 16 states will be awarded CDC oral health grants this year. Including this funding in the KDHE budget would offer stability in the Bureau of Oral Health's programming and help ensure continuity of the school screening and sealant programs and community water fluoridation work in the long term. Some other states provide similar funding for their state oral health programs, and the consistency they see in oral health programs at the state level is markedly better than states that do not provide similar funding to their state health departments.

Medicaid Expansion

Oral Health Kansas supports the agency's proposal for Medicaid Expansion. It is a uniquely important way to ensure underserved Kansans have access to health and oral healthcare. [A 2020 report](#) by the Kansas Health Institute found that about 40% of working age adults in Kansas do not have dental insurance. Many of these Kansans are the working poor who have jobs that do not offer dental insurance, and they would be in the Medicaid Expansion population.

One unintended consequence we see of not expanding Medicaid is related to sedation dental care. For a very small part of the population, dental care can only be provided under general anesthesia in a hospital setting. A handful of rural hospitals are able to provide space for sedation dental care to be provided, but with the financial risks they face, that care is in jeopardy. If a rural hospital that does offer sedation dental care were to close, access to that lifesaving service would disappear for many people.

We appreciate this Committee's dedication to the Kansas Medicaid program and ensuring Kansans can lead happy, healthy, and productive lives. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Tanya Dorf Brunner
Executive Director
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Basic Preventive Dental Coverage in Kansas

Why is basic preventive dental coverage important?

- Tooth decay and gum disease are nearly 100% preventable yet can cause severe pain, infection, and even be life threatening. Routine preventive care like a checkup, x-rays, and cleaning help prevent these diseases and catch disease early.
- When tooth decay and gum disease are not prevented or discovered and treated early, the cost of dental care becomes much higher.
- The way a person's teeth and mouth look, feel, and function can have a big impact on how others view them, how they perceive themselves, and their ability to work.¹

Why is it important to cover dental exams/x-rays/cleanings in Medicaid?

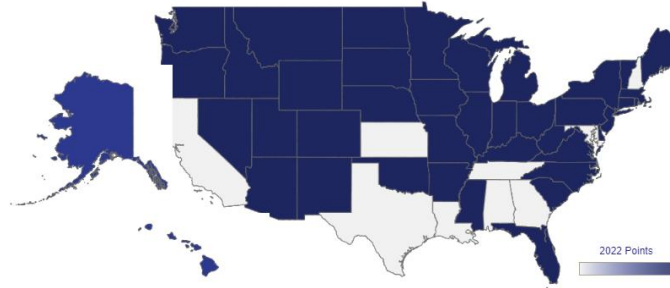
- Kansas is the only state that uses a combination of Medicaid and value-added benefits (VABs) for adult dental coverage.
- How the VABs are structured varies by managed care organization and changes from year to year, making the system difficult to navigate for dental providers
- When it is hard to understand how the most essential and basic dental care is covered, providers are reluctant to care for adults.

Who would be affected if Medicaid included basic preventive dental care for adults in Kansas?

- 38% of the Kansas Medicaid population are adults over the age of 21.²
- 7551 Kansas adults received restorative dental care in 2023.
- The adult dental utilization rate in Kansas is around 4%.

Do other states cover basic preventive dental care in Medicaid?

- Over 40 states, including all of our neighboring states, provide basic preventive dental coverage.
- The map below shows states that cover exams for adults.³



What will it cost to include basic preventive dental care in Medicaid?

- The budget estimate to include coverage of exams/x-rays/cleanings for adults in the Kansas Medicaid program is \$4,847,485 All Funds. This includes \$1,936,813 in State General Funds.

Who supports including preventive dental care in the Kansas Medicaid program?

- A growing list of statewide and local organizations would like to see basic preventive dental care included in the Kansas Medicaid program. This includes disabilities service providers, older adult advocates and providers, behavioral health advocates, early childhood advocates, and dental clinics.



<https://oralhealthkansas.org/BasicPreventiveAdvocacy.html>

¹ National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research "Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges," 2021. <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/Oral-Health-in-America-Advances-and-Challenges.pdf>

² KDHE Presentation to House Social Services Budget Committee, January 24, 2023,

http://kslegislature.org/li/b/2023_24/committees/ctte_h_soc_svcs_bdgct_1/misc_documents/download_testimony/ctte_h_soc_svcs_bdgct_1_20230124_01_testimony.html

³ CareQuest Institute for Oral Health: Medicaid Adult Dental Benefit Coverage Checker, <https://www.carequest.org/Medicaid-Adult-Dental-Coverage-Checker>