

Board of Directors

Charles A. Abbick, DDS
Salina Family Healthcare Center

Tami Allen
Families Together, Inc.

Melanie Simmer-Beck, PhD, RDH
UMKC School of Dentistry

Veronica Byrd
Parents as Teachers Pine Ridge

Kent Haverkamp, MD
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas

Davette McCoy, MHS, RDH, ECP III
Kansas Dental Hygienists' Assoc.

Debra Meisenheimer, BS, MS, CPC

Trina Morgan
Kansas Children's Service League

Debra Pochop
Rawlins County Dental Clinic

Michelle Ponce
Association of Community Mental
Health Centers of Kansas

Kevin Robertson, MPA, CAE
Kansas Dental Association

Linda J Sheppard, JD
Kansas Health Institute

Preddis Sullivan, DDS
Delta Dental of Kansas

Shannon Uehling
Sunflower Health Plan

**Bob Bethell Joint Committee on HCBS and KanCare Oversight Committee
February 2, 2024**

Chair Landwehr and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony for the Committee. 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

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. **Because of the Legislature's investment in dental care for adults, thousands of Kansans are now accessing dental care.** 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:**

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.

Since last summer, Oral Health Kansas has been providing training about what dental care is covered for adults and how it works. We have provided training to over 400 care managers at all three of the KanCare managed care organizations, as well as for several other organizations throughout the state.

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.

Basic Preventive Dental Care

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 Managed Care Organizations (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 less expensive than more complex treatments.

Dental providers can be hesitant to become Medicaid providers, and even current Medicaid dental providers can be hesitant to begin serving adults. It is hard for a provider to decide to take the leap and become a Medicaid provider for both adults and children with the complexity of needing to understand how the VAB dental exams and cleanings work for each MCO as well as how the Medicaid dental services work. As we have been promoting adult dental coverage to providers, we have heard this over and over again. They have told us it is necessary to move the exams, x-rays, and cleanings from the VABs to the Medicaid state plan. This will streamline the dental benefit and avoid confusion for both consumers and providers. It can make all the difference for dental providers who are on the fence about becoming Medicaid providers.

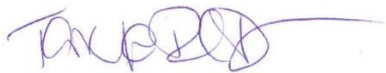
An overview of this issue is on the following page.

We thank the Committee for its recommendation about basic dental preventive care in the [Report to the 2024 Legislature](#):

The House Committee on Social Services Budget work with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and stakeholders to include coverage for adult dental exams and cleanings in KanCare;

This year we will work with a growing coalition of organizations to advocate with the House Social Services Budget Committee and Senate Ways and Means Human Services Subcommittee to allocate funding to cover basic preventive dental care for adults in the Medicaid program.

Sincerely,



Tanya Dorf Brunner
Executive Director
tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org

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?

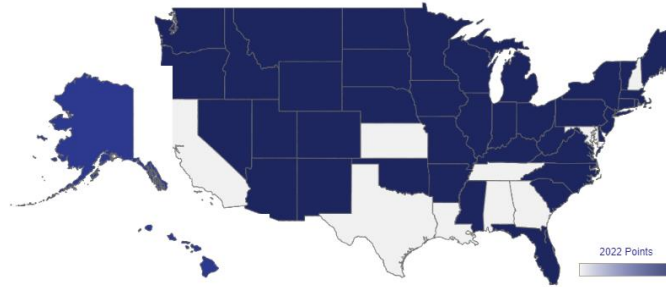
- Kansas is the only state that uses a combination of Medicaid and value-added benefits (VABs) for adult dental coverage.
- How the VABs are structured varies by managed care organization and changes from year to year, making the system difficult to navigate for dental providers
- When it is hard to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



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/b2023_24/committees/cte_h_soc_svcs_bdgt_1/misc_documents/download_testimony/cte_h_soc_svcs_bdgt_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>