



ORAL HEALTH KANSAS
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION

Medicaid Basic Preventive Dental Care Talking Points

Current Medicaid/KanCare dental coverage for adults

- As of July 1, 2023, KanCare covers fillings, crowns, periodontal (gum disease care, and dentures for all adults.
- The KanCare managed care organizations (MCO) offer a \$500 annual value-added benefit (VAB) for adults that includes exams, x-rays, and cleanings. These details of what is covered in the VABs vary from one MCO to another and from year to year.

The importance of preventive dental care

- Tooth decay and gum disease are preventable.
- Toothbrushing and flossing, along with good nutrition, help keep people healthy, but routine preventive care includes removing plaque and tartar, fluoride treatments, and oral health counseling.
- Routine examinations, x-rays, and cleanings ensure any problems are caught early. Early detection makes treatment easier and less expensive.
- [CareQuest Institute published a study in 2022](#) showing that Medicaid programs save money when adults are able to access routine preventive dental care.

New coverage could improve access to dental care for adults

- In October 2023, [KDHE reported to the KanCare Oversight Committee](#) that they have received feedback that adults with KanCare coverage have difficulty finding a dentist.
- The state of Maryland implemented Medicaid adult dental coverage in January 2023. This coverage includes basic preventive care. In the first 11 months, utilization of the benefit was 23%.
- In the first full year of Medicaid adult dental coverage in Kansas (without basic preventive care), the utilization rate was about 4%.
- Medicaid pays low rates for dental care, making it challenging for providers to offer services to adults. The confusion about coverage, specifically for preventive care under VABs, adds another barrier for dental offices to accept Medicaid.

What will be included in the preventive dental care package

- Dental examinations and x-rays
- Basic cleanings
- Oral hygiene counseling
- Nutritional counseling
- Tobacco counseling
 - The American Dental Association recently published [new guidance for dental offices about making referrals to the Tobacco Quitline](#).

Remove confusion

- Consumers and providers will not have to worry about whether the \$500 allowable under the value-added benefits has been spent each year.
- Providers will not have to wonder how each MCO's value-added benefits work and what they cover for basic preventive dental care.

Who will have coverage

- 38% of the Kansas Medicaid population are adults over the age of 21, or approximately 180,000 adults.
- All adults enrolled in Medicaid would be eligible for preventive dental care coverage.

2024 budget request

- \$4,847,485 All Funds (\$1,936,813 SGF) to cover basic preventive dental care for adults enrolled in the Kansas Medicaid program.
- The coverage will include important prevention counseling services such as nutritional and tobacco counseling.

For more information

- Visit Oral Health Kansas' webpage: <https://oralhealthkansas.org/BasicPreventiveAdvocacy.html>
- Contact Tanya Dorf Brunner at tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org