



Board of Directors

Sonja Armbruster
Wichita State University

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

Chip Blaser
Douglas Co. Community Found.

Veronica Byrd
Parents as Teachers Pine Ridge

Barb Conant
Kansas Advocates for Better Care

Robyne Goates
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas

Krista Hahn, RDH, MBA, ECP III
Marian Dental Clinic

Debra Meisenheimer, BS, MS, CPC

Kevin Robertson, MPA, CAE
Kansas Dental Association

Nick Rogers, DDS
Rogers Family Dentistry

Jonalan Smith, PharmD
Lockton Companies

Preddis Sullivan, DDS
Delta Dental of Kansas

James B. Trotter, DDS, PA

Whitney Zamora, RDH
Kansas Dental Hygienists' Assoc.

**Senate Public Health & Welfare
Oral Health in Kansas Briefing
January 28, 2021**

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share some additional updates regarding oral health in Kansas with the Committee today. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director at Oral Health Kansas. Oral Health Kansas (OHK) is the state's consumer oral health advocacy organization, and our mission is to improve oral health for all Kansans through advocacy, public awareness, and education. We currently have over 1600 supporters throughout the state who share our vision to ensure Kansans have access to dental providers and a way to pay for dental services.

ADULT DENTAL BENEFIT STUDY

The Kansas Medicaid program includes the bare minimum dental benefits for adults. Emergency dental services are covered, which means people who have a dental problem, that can sometimes even be life threatening, can have an extraction. But our Medicaid program does not pay for dentures when people do lose teeth or other tooth restorations which can prevent tooth loss. Many adults who were able to keep their teeth healthy in their childhood with regular cleanings and the occasional filling are not able to continue that oral health journey in their adulthood. Oral health is tied to overall health, and the relationship between dental infections and heart disease, diabetes, and pre-term births is strong. Dental care can seem so routine for most of us, and when we access it regularly, most of us avoid major dental problems. But it is out of reach for many low-income Kansans, and it not only affects their health, but also their ability to get and maintain good jobs.

We have been in conversation with the Health Policy Institute at the American Dental Association (ADA) for several months about developing a cost-benefit study for an adult dental benefit in Kansas. The Health Policy Institute generates and disseminates innovative research on topics such as access to dental care, dental care utilization and benefits, and oral health outcomes for policy makers, health care advocates, and providers. They produced a similar cost-benefit study for the state oral health coalition in Virginia in 2020, and it was influential in policymakers' understanding of how investing in adult dental benefits can help save money in other areas of the Medicaid program, such as diabetes care. We are continuing to work with the Health Policy Institute on a study in Kansas, and we project the study may be complete in early to mid-March. It should show not only the projected cost of providing comprehensive dental benefits for adults, but also the savings that can be realized in Medicaid by reducing Emergency Room visits and helping people manage their diabetes. We look forward to the opportunity to share the results with the Committee.

KANSAS ORAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ACT

Last year, this Committee introduced the Kansas Oral Health Improvement Act ([SB 349](#)). The bill did not move before the Legislature had to adjourn early due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we are requesting the bill be re-introduced with a few changes. One major change is that a Medicaid dental rate increase can be left out of the bill, because it passed through the budget process last year. We look forward to discussing the bill more with you once it is introduced.

712 S. Kansas Ave, Suite 414 AB
Topeka, KS 66603

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

www.oralhealthkansas.org

NEXT STEPS

Thank you for the opportunity to share information with you today about many aspects of the public oral health system in Kansas. There is so much to discuss! The 2021 Kansas Oral Health Report Card, Dental Insurance Coverage and Unmet Dental Needs in Kansas report, impact of the Medicaid dental rate increase on the provider network, ongoing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kansas Oral Health Improvement Act, and upcoming cost-benefit study from the ADA Health Policy Institute offer much to discuss. We hope that the information shared today will be the jump start for those conversations, and we look forward to many more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Tanya Dorf-Brunner', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tanya Dorf-Brunner
Executive Director
tdorf@ohks.org