

Board of Directors

Tami Allen
Families Together, Inc.

Sonja Armbruster
Wichita State University

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

Michelle Ponce
Association of Community Mental
Health Centers of Kansas

Kevin Robertson, MPA, CAE
Kansas Dental Association

Nick Rogers, DDS
Rogers Family Dentistry

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 April 21, 2023

Chair Gossage 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 dental health by shaping policy and educating the public, so Kansans know that all mouths matter.

Denture Coverage

On behalf of Oral Health Kansas and the coalition of organizations we are partnering with this year, I want to thank you for championing the addition of denture coverage to the KanCare adult dental benefits this year. The budget passed by the 2023 Legislature includes \$1.2 million to add coverage of dentures, partials, and adjustments. Just before the first budget conference committee meeting this year, a colleague told me that a friend of hers who is covered by Medicaid was on his way to his first Medicaid adult dental appointment. He was so happy to have that service available, but he was worried that he may need dentures and they would not be covered. It's heartening to know that his worry did not have to last long because of the action you took this year.

The denture coverage will have three benefits in our state:

1. **Health benefits:** Eating well is key to achieving diabetic control and therefore, a healthy diet can both increase health for the individual and reduce burgeoning healthcare costs by lowering the risk of costly diabetic complications. Covering 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.
2. **Economic benefits:** Dentures and partials are not only key to people's ability to eat healthy food and control chronic illnesses like diabetes, they also are key to people's ability to get and keep jobs. When people are unable to smile confidently because of missing teeth, it is hard for them to be employable. We are hopeful that more people will be able to take advantage of ads like this because of the denture coverage.



PO Box 4567
Topeka, KS 66604

785-235-6039 (phone)
info@oralhealthkansas.org
www.oralhealthkansas.org

3. **Savings:** Last year we shared new research from the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute that showed the state of Kansas will save money in medical care with the coverage of dental care in KanCare. This study marked the first time an economic model was available to demonstrate not only the projected cost but also the projected savings associated with covering dental care. That report was predicated on the assumption that dentures would be included in KanCare, and now they will be.

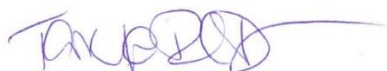
Again, on behalf of the members of our denture coalition listed below, thank you for investing in the future of KanCare members by extending dental coverage to include life and job saving dentures and partials.

- Baptist-Trinity Lutheran Legacy Foundation
- CDDO of Butler County
- Central Plains Area Agency on Aging
- Doniphan County Services and Workskills
- Goodlife Innovations
- Harvesters - The Community Food Network
- Health Forward Foundation
- InterHab
- KanCare Advocates Network
- Kansas Advocates for Better Care
- Kansas Dental Association
- Kansas Dental Hygienists' Association
- Kansas Foodbank Warehouse, Inc.
- Kansas Head Start Association
- Kansas Health Care Association/KS Center for Assisted Living
- Kansas Public Health Association
- Kansas State Nurses Association
- Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition
- Lakemary
- LeadingAge Kansas
- LINK, Inc
- NAMI-Kansas
- Rawlins County Dental Clinic Fund
- Second Harvest Community Food Bank

What's next?

In our conversations with KanCare members and providers since the adult dental benefit went into effect, we have learned that there is confusion about what is covered and by whom. This is in large part because each of the MCOs has different benefits available through their VABs. A few providers have even told us that the confusing set of benefits is one reason they are hesitant to become Medicaid providers. We plan to continue those conversations to learn more and come back to you with a potential recommendation to include the basic exam and cleaning coverage in the Medicaid program. We appreciate your understanding and interest in this important issue and look forward to more conversations with you about ensuring the adult dental coverage is working well.

Sincerely,



Tanya Dorf Brunner
Executive Director

tdorf@oralhealthkansas.org