

Estimating the Cost of Introducing Comprehensive Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits in Kansas

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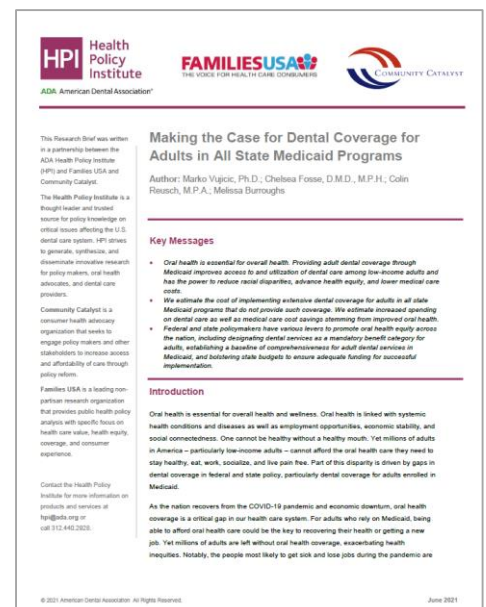
Key Messages

- *Implementing comprehensive adult dental benefits in Medicaid in Kansas would require an **estimated year one investment of \$1.4 million** in state funds.*
- *The estimated net cost after reaching “steady state” spending levels three years following implementation is roughly **\$960,000 annually** in state funds. This estimate comes from \$7.2 million in total additional dental care costs offset by \$4.8 million in medical care and emergency department cost savings, and applying the state’s FMAP (i.e., “Medicaid match”). The net cost translates to **\$0.51 per enrollee per month** in state funds.*

In July 2021, the ADA Health Policy Institute (HPI), Families USA, and Community Catalyst released a white paper, “[Making the Case for Dental Coverage for Adults in All State Medicaid Programs.](#)” Adult dental coverage is optional in Medicaid programs, yet there is a growing body of evidence that **dental benefits improve access to dental care among low-income adults while reducing racial inequities and lowering medical care costs.**

Kansas is one of 16 states that currently provides limited dental benefits for adult enrollees in Medicaid. For Kansas and all other states with limited, emergency-only, or even no adult dental benefits in their Medicaid program, we estimated the increased dental care costs associated with providing extensive coverage, as well as fiscal offsets for medical care cost reductions since improved oral health is associated with lower medical care costs for conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and pregnancy.

The data used for these previous cost estimates in the white paper were based on national data, and did not account for expected savings in emergency department costs due to data constraints.



We recently collaborated with Oral Health Kansas to obtain new data from the Kansas Division of Healthcare Finance for a refined state-level estimate. Similar to the above-referenced white paper, we modeled costs and savings over a three-year timeframe to account for the fact that the impact of introducing Medicaid dental benefits is not immediate; awareness among enrollees and provider adjustment is required for full impact. We also included additional cost savings from reduced emergency department visits for dental conditions.

Table 1: Estimated Cost of Adding a Comprehensive Adult Dental Benefit in Medicaid in Kansas

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Medicaid enrollment, adults	157,300	157,300	157,300
Dental care utilization rate, baseline	15.2%	15.2%	15.2%
Dental care utilization rate, post reform	18.0%	20.7%	23.5%
Additional enrollees receiving dental care	4,352	8,704	13,056
Average dental care costs per patient per year, post reform	\$437	\$437	\$437
Additional costs for new dental patients	\$1,901,809	\$3,803,619	\$5,705,428
Additional costs for existing dental patients	\$1,506,305	\$1,506,305	\$1,506,305
Estimated total additional dental care costs	\$3,408,114	\$5,309,924	\$7,211,733
Estimated reduction in health care costs for those...			
with diabetes	\$0	\$117,503	\$352,509
with cardiovascular disease	\$0	\$264,695	\$794,086
who are pregnant	\$0	\$113,586	\$340,759
with an emergency department visit for a dental condition	\$0	\$1,663,290	\$3,326,580
Estimated total medical care cost savings	\$0	\$2,159,075	\$4,813,935
Net additional cost of adult dental benefit	\$3,408,114	\$3,150,849	\$2,397,798
State share of net additional cost of adult dental benefit	\$1,357,793	\$1,255,298	\$955,283
Net cost per enrollee per month	\$1.81	\$1.67	\$1.27
Net cost per enrollee per month (state share)	\$0.72	\$0.67	\$0.51

Please see the following for notes on methodology: Vujcic M, Fosse C, Reusch C, Burroughs M. Making the case for adults in all state Medicaid programs. Health Policy Institute White Paper. American Dental Association in partnership with Community Catalyst and Families USA. July 2021. Available from:

https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/WhitePaper_0721.pdf.

Additional state-level analyses are available at [ADA.org/HPI](https://www.ada.org/HPI). The Health Policy Institute is pleased to work with policymakers and advocates on research initiatives related to the dental care sector.