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September 28, 2020

Testimony for Robert G. (Bob) Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community Based Services and KanCare Oversight

Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

Oral Health Kansas is the state-wide 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. Thank you for the opportunity to provide information about the Medicaid dental program for the Committee. We have several updates that we feel are pertinent to your oversight of the Medicaid dental program.

Dental Reimbursement Rates

At the June KanCare Oversight Committee hearing, we shared an update that the FY2021 Budget passed during the 2020 Legislative Session included a \$3 million All Funds increase for Medicaid dental reimbursement rates. We remain grateful to the Committee for your support of this increase. Oral Health Kansas worked alongside the Kansas Dental Association and the previous Medicaid Director to target dental codes that would support the intended impact of expanding the Medicaid dental provider network in Kansas.

In August, we submitted public comments on the state plan amendment that is needed to implement the increase to Medicaid dental reimbursement rates. The proposed state plan amendment appears to have left off several of the codes we had targeted for an increase with the previous Medicaid Director. One of the most important codes we'd like to call to your attention to is D9420 which is for Hospital Calls. Oral Health Kansas receives calls from many families across the state expressing frustration about their inability to find a dentist that has hospital privileges. This results in families not being able to utilize their KanCare dental benefits, poor oral health, and ultimately poor overall health. This code, D9420, would increase dentist's ability to provide sedative dentistry within a hospital setting which is often one of the only ways individuals with disabilities can access essential dental services. We did a survey of other state Medicaid programs to determine their rates for D9420 and determined the rate Kansas pays for this code is among the lowest in the nation.

The full list of codes we noticed missing from the list included: D0140, D0145, D0210, D0240, D0250, D0251, D0270, D0273, D0277, D0321, D0322, D0330, D1516, D1517, D1526, D1550, D1575, D2930, D4341, D7140, D7219, D9230, and D9420. We have submitted public comments and contacted KDHE Division of Health Care Finance to raise our concerns. Today we wanted to elevate the importance of including codes such as D9420 in the FY2021 Medicaid dental reimbursement rate increase.

Dental Research Studies

As you may recall, Oral Health Kansas has referred to a couple dental studies in the works at previous KanCare Oversight Committee Hearings. We are excited to announce we are working with the Kansas Health Institute to produce a report studying the number of Kansans who have dental insurance and the number who have unmet dental needs. The report should be finalized in October 2020 and will include future policy and research implications to improve the oral health of Kansas. We are also continuing to work with the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute on a study that would estimate the cost and offsets of introducing comprehensive adult Medicaid dental benefits in Kansas.

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This report should be finalized by the end of 2020. We look forward to the opportunity to share the outcomes of these studies with the Committee and a future discussion about the dental needs in the state.

Teledentistry

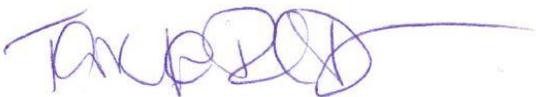
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the CDC recommended dental offices close for all but emergency procedures. By the week of April 6, 95% of dental offices in Kansas were closed, but 82% were available for emergencies. The biggest issue for consumers was knowing what constituted a dental emergency. We put out a guide for consumers to understand what a dental emergency was. On May 4, dental offices began opening again, but they opened slowly. We were pleased that KDHE authorized two KanCare dental codes to be provided via teledentistry through June 30. This helped Medicaid dental providers assess the needs of their patients and prioritize how and when to see them, both during the office closures and as they opened back up again. The purpose of teledentistry is to triage needs. Dental services cannot be performed, but dentists are able to assess urgency, prioritize patient needs, and even soothe patients' worries about their dental needs. Because aerosols are produced in dental procedures and the coronavirus is spread through aerosols, it is important for dental office staff to use additional personal protective equipment (PPE) in order to keep everyone safe. This means an added benefit of teledentistry is that it can reduce the burn rate of PPE if dentists are able to assess dental needs via video without having to don all of the PPE necessary to step into the patient exam room.

Oral Health Kansas has been working with Community Care Network of Kansas and the Kansas Dental Association to advocate to authorize teledentistry more permanently. When the legislature passed HB 2016 during the June special session, authorization of telehealth services was extended. The definitions of telehealth and healthcare providers were very broad, and we interpreted them to include all healthcare professionals, including dental care professionals. Since then the Kansas Dental Board's attorney and the legal department at KDHE have interpreted the definition more narrowly to include just medical professionals.

Today all dental offices are open in Kansas again, but 49% are seeing a lower patient volume than usual. We continue to believe it is important to make dental care as easy to access as possible as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, and authorizing teledentistry is one clear way this can happen. Kansas is becoming an island in regard to teledentistry, as our neighboring states of Missouri, Nebraska, and Colorado have authorized it. We believe Kansas needs to remain competitive with our neighbors by ensuring dental professionals have the full suite of services and technology available to them and that consumers are able to have their needs assessed as easily and safely as possible. As the Committee considers recommendations for the 2021 Legislature, we ask that you include a recommendation that teledentistry be authorized in the state of Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to share important updates that impact the Medicaid dental program. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Oral Health Kansas is happy to assist the Committee, as you continue working to ensure all Kansans have access to the dental care they need.

Sincerely,



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