

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Bethell at 3:30 p.m. on January 28, 2008, in Room 514-S of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Judy Holliday, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Andrew Snyder, Policy Specialist, National Academy of State Health Policy
Shelly Gehshan, National Academy of State Health Policy
Dr. Katherine Weno, Director, Office of Oral Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Kathy Harding, Executive Director, Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Bethell welcomed Teresa Schwab, Executive Director, Oral Health Kansas, who introduced Shelly Gehshan from the National Academy of Health Policy (NASHP). Committee members received a packet of information, "Kansas Health Reform: Options for Adding Dental Benefits." (On file in Room 161-W)

Ms. Gehshan noted that dental care is the biggest unmet need among lower income residents and also those who are uninsured. Ms. Gehshan pointed out the direct correlation between oral health problems and heart disease, diabetes and other serious health conditions. The biggest deterrent to oral health problems would be community fluoridation, sealants, early intervention, and expanding the safety net to include more clinics and professional staff to provide dental care to the underserved.

Ken Moore, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, came forward to tell the Committee about the success of the sealant program underwritten by his organization.

Andrew Snyder, Policy Specialist for NASHP, spoke about several options available for providing adequate oral health care: expanding Medicaid; offering a private dental insurance product; or a combination of Medicaid and private dental benefits through a 'Connector,' which is an independent public authority charged with designing affordable and adequate dental coverage. Mr. Snyder responded to questions from several Committee members.

Dr. Katherine Weno, Director, Office of Oral Health, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, presented an overview of the Kansas State Oral Health Plan. (Attachment 1) Dr. Weno told the Committee that providing a statewide, all-inclusive oral health plan has become the number one priority of the Office of Oral Health. Dr. Weno summarized the four components of the Oral Health Plan: 1) Dental workforce—recruitment of dentists and dental hygienists to serve in rural areas and safety net clinics; 2) financing for oral health services— finding ways to pay for dental services for underserved populations; 3) Community and Public Health—involving communities in projects such as fluoridation of water supplies, dental sealants on molars of children under three, oral health curriculum in school health programs, and developing mobile dental hygiene programs in schools, community centers and nursing homes. Dr. Weno responded to questions of several Committee members.

Kathy Harding, Executive Director, Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU), updated the Committee on Safety Net "Dental Hubs." (Attachment 2) Director Harding explained the dental hub concept, with oral health care professionals in safety net clinics ('hubs') and Expanded Care Practice dental hygienists in off-site locations ('spokes'). A group of foundations and state offices formed a new public-private partnership to fund the Dental Hub Grant Program. Director Harding told the Committee that nine applicants applied for funding which benefits service areas in over 33 Kansas counties with a total population of over 900,000.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.