COMMISSION ON AGING ITEMS ON THE JOHNSON COUNTY 2019 STATE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

AGING SERVICES

Johnson County supports the continued full funding of the Senior Care Act (SCA) for Area Agencies on Aging. These services are essential to keep the aging population out of the Medicaid Nursing Home Program and are cost effective for the state and federal funding sources that support the frail and elderly population. By example, it costs on average $200 per month to serve someone on the SCA program compared to the average $6,000 per month to serve the same person in a Medicaid facility bed.

STATEWIDE EXPANSION OF MEDICAID (KANCARE)

Johnson County supports Medicaid expansion through KanCare in Kansas. Providing Medicaid is the responsibility of the state and federal government. The County is required to have a public health department and provide mental health services and the decision to limit Medicaid expansion has an impact on the citizens of Johnson County. Absent the state’s participation in Medicaid expansion, county taxpayers are required to pay for these services that would otherwise be covered by Medicaid. Through local tax revenue, Johnson County provides approximately $6.4 million in charitable care for mental health services and over $2.2 million in uncompensated care for emergency medical care through Medical Action (MED-ACT) (approximately 1 mill) that could be significantly reduced by Medicaid expansion.

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (HCBS) IN THE MEDICAID (KANCARE) PROGRAM

As the KanCare program awards the second contract to Managed Care Organizations, Johnson County urges the State to evaluate the success of HCBS waiver programs within KanCare and determine if the KanCare program is well suited for continued oversight of HCBS waiver programs. No integration of HCBS waivers should be considered at least until all HCBS waiver programs have stabilized and quality concerns are sufficiently addressed, regardless of whether the HCBS waivers reside in or out of the KanCare program.

REGISTERED DENTAL THERAPIST

Access to dental care continues to be a challenge for low-income Kansans, including those in Johnson County. In its recent Community Health Assessment, 1 in 10 people in Johnson County said they had a problem getting healthcare for themselves or a family member in the last 12 months, and of those 32 percent had difficulty accessing dental care. Passage of the Registered Dental Therapist legislation will increase access to quality, cost-effective dental care for Kansas families.
GUARDIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (GAP)

We support the addition of GAP services to the DCF program. This can be accomplished through departmental policy changes or legislation to implement the Guardian Assistance Program (GAP) in Kansas by accessing funds available through Federal Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. This Act was passed unanimously by Congress in 2008. So far, 36 states, including most surrounding states (Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas) have enacted this program. Implementation of the GAP program cannot, by law, exceed monies allocated to servicing those placed in foster care. However, GAP would allow children in the foster care system to stay with family members, enhancing the child’s quality of life, as well as helping to relieve stress on the foster care system.

LOWERING THE SALES TAX ON FOOD

We support eliminating or significantly reducing the state sales tax on food. This will put more money in the pockets of consumers and will help to ease the financial burden on those with fixed incomes, including the elderly. Kansas is one of only 14 states that taxes food and is among only seven states that tax food at the full sales tax rate. Seven of the 14 states have some form of reduced state tax on necessities such as medicines and groceries. The latest tax increase gave Kansas a combined average state and local sales tax of 8.59%. States that tax groceries (rate if not fully taxed): Alabama, Arkansas (3%), Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois (1%), Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri (1.225%), Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee (5.5%), Utah (1.75%), Virginia (1.5% + 1% local option tax), and West Virginia (5%).