



**An independent voice for
those served by KanCare.**

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April 13, 2016

Dr. Susan Mosier, Secretary
Kansas Department of Health and Environment
900 SW Jackson Avenue, Suite 900
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Secretary Mosier:

The KanCare Advocates Network (KAN) is a coalition of advocates whose collective interests include issues impacting children and adults who are served by the Kansas Medicaid program, KanCare. We are writing to share our serious, ongoing concerns about delays in the processing of Medicaid applications. As you are aware, 16,202 applications and 22,939 reviews were unprocessed and therefore unresolved as of March 13, 2016. These delays jeopardize the health and well-being of vulnerable Kansans in need of medical assistance.

While the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) has indicated that it plans to address the backlog within six months from February, the March report to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) indicates the numbers of non-timely applications pending eligibility determination continue to increase, despite the additional resources KDHE reportedly implemented to reduce the backlog. Of most importance, these delays are placing vulnerable persons of all ages in jeopardy of short and long-term negative health outcomes due to their inability to access needed healthcare and services.

We appreciate the efforts the State has made to add resources, to expedite certain determinations or relieve the financial pressures for nursing facility providers. Due to the large and increasing numbers of Kansans affected, a more expeditious solution is needed to resolve this serious problem in a more reasonable timeframe. We believe it is important for all eligible persons, of any age, living at home or in a facility who need care and services, to be able to access it. We request KDHE propose measures which will provide for such access now.

We represent the interests of a diverse range of Kansas constituencies affected by the delays. Lack of access to timely health care coverage harms pregnant mothers, infants, individuals with disabilities, and the elderly:

Pregnant Mothers

Pregnant mothers who lack early, regular prenatal care experience increased risk of premature birth and other complications that may threaten a newborn's life. The 2016 State Efficiency Study commissioned by the Legislature recommended policies that reduce preterm births and costly associated health problems.

Infants

Delayed health care coverage risks the health of infants during the first months of life, which are a critical period for brain development. Infants without coverage may miss routine well-child examinations, including screening and early intervention for developmental and sensory delays. Infants without coverage are less likely to receive recommended on-time immunizations. Kansas mothers and infants with delayed Medicaid applications may be unable to obtain WIC newborn services, which require proof of insurance within 30 days of service delivery. Failure to provide needed health care coverage during the first months of a child's life can contribute to negative health outcomes that last a lifetime.

Individuals with disabilities

Medicaid coverage is one of the most important lifelines for Kansans with disabilities. In addition to the complex medical needs of Kansans with disabilities, the long term care services afforded to people with disabilities under Medicaid are generally not available in the private insurance market. Without access to Medicaid, Kansans with disabilities will not be able to obtain or maintain employment, their already complex health problems will deteriorate, and they will not be able to live independent lives as full citizens. Any backlog has devastating impacts on the health, independence and long term care needs of Kansans with disabilities.

Elderly Kansans

It is critical that older adults and people of all ages who need long term care and have exhausted their own resources to meet those needs are able to access health care and supportive services in a reasonable timeframe. Without such access older adults are at significantly higher risk of negative health outcomes such as serious illness, injury or premature death, all of which results in unnecessary and higher health care costs to the program. The long delays in Medicaid eligibility determination raise additional problems for older applicants such as premature institutionalization when elders are unable to cover the unreimbursed cost of months of home-based care; inability to gain access to care in nursing or assisted residential facilities because providers cannot underwrite months of unreimbursed care costs; or delayed hospital discharge due to provider reluctance to accept Medicaid pending clients,

On behalf of the Kansans unable to receive needed health care coverage, we urge the state to promptly resolve delays in the processing of Medicaid applications. We ask that KDHE to provide us with the following:

- a reduction plan that includes benchmarks for specific reduction numbers and specific timeframes to accomplish the stated goals;
- on-going meetings to address the backlog and issues of concern to the KanCare Advocates Network.

We are available to provide any information or assistance that could help address this issue.

Sincerely,
Sean Gatewood
KanCare Advocates Network

Maren Turner, PhD, MS, Executive Director
AARP Kansas

Hal Schultz, Convener Elect
Big Tent Coalition

Rocky Nichols, Executive Director
Disability Rights Center of Kansas

Kathy Stiffler, PhD, Executive Director
The Alliance for Kansans with Developmental Disabilities

Janet Williams, MSW, PhD, CEO and President
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Oral Health Kansas

Mike Oxford, Executive Director
Topeka Independent Living and Resource Center

(Hard copy to follow)

Cc:

The Honorable Governor Sam Brownback
Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, MD
Secretary Tim Keck, Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services
Sen. Susan Wagle, Senate President
Rep. Ray Merrick, Speaker of the House
Rep. Tom Burroughs, House Minority Leader
Sen. Anthony Hensley, Senate Minority Leader
Rep. Dan Hawkins, Chair, House Health & Human Services Committee
Sen. Michael O'Donnell, Chair, Senate Health & Public Welfare Committee
Rep. Willie Dove, Chair, Subcommittee on KanCare issues
Rep. Jim Kelley, Subcommittee member
Rep. Les Osterman, Subcommittee member
Rep. Jim Ward, Subcommittee member
Victoria Wachino, CMS
James Scott, CMS
Megan Buck, CMS
Karen Hatcher, CMS
Kevin Slaver, CMS