I recently testified before the Bob Bethell KanCare Oversight Committee to relay important updates regarding the State’s Medicaid program. The information was shared with legislators, stakeholders and others. While outlining the great strides we have made to improve cost efficiencies and health outcomes for Medicaid consumers, I also shared with the committee progress being made to the KanCare Clearinghouse, which is responsible for processing Medicaid applications through eligibility determinations.

When I was appointed Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment this year, I knew improving the operation of our Medicaid program was a top priority. The process has included strengthening our team and evaluating our contracts. In 2016, the State entered into an agreement with MAXIMUS, a private company hired to process Medicaid applications. MAXIMUS’ performance has not met our standards. There was a tremendous backlog developed due to understaffing. Additionally, oversight and training were lacking. While the bid was appealing from a cost-savings perspective, you get what you pay for. The subsequent performance has been unacceptable. We are proposing a strategy in the very best interest of the State and those applying for KanCare—a phased approach.

As we finalize an extension with MAXIMUS, we can share with you some details of our plan. Of paramount importance—the State will take over certain responsibilities. Specifically, effective Jan. 1, 2019, we’ll handle training and quality. Effective, July 1, 2019, the State will take over responsibilities for the processing of elderly and disabled applications. These applications are complex and must be done quickly and accurately for our most vulnerable populations. MAXIMUS is being held accountable—making $10 million in concessions to the State. The price we will pay going forward will ensure the Medicaid eligibility process meets the standards Kansans deserve. The strategy will enhance operations of our system and ultimately promote the health and well-being of the Kansans we serve.
Division of Public Health

Governor’s Task Force to Address SUDs

The final Substance Use Disorder Task Force meeting was held Aug. 23. The group is now preparing its final recommendations to submit to the Governor by Sept. 1. More information can be found at preventoverdoseks.org.

EBT WIC Card

Recent implementation of eWIC (transition from paper checks to debit cards) has reduced the amount of paper checks processed by grocery stores to less than $1,000 per day. eWIC transactions have grown to approximately $80,000 per day.

Count the Kicks

A new stillbirth prevention initiative, Count the Kicks, is a campaign focused on educating providers and patients about monitoring fetal movements during the third trimester. It was recently launched with customized Kansas materials and video.

State Collaboration to Support Mothers

KDHE is working with KDADS and DCF, along with other State agencies to request funding from the U.S. Health Resources and Service Administration for a Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Disorders program.

West Nile

Half of Kansas, including the north central, south central and southwest parts of the state, was identified as being at “High Risk” for West Nile Virus. KDHE issued a release with information about risks prevention measures.

Division of Environment

KDHE 2018 Environmental Conference

The KDHE Division of Environment hosted the 2018 Environmental Conference on Aug. 7-9, in Wichita. Representatives from the industry, consultants and local, State and federal government representatives were in attendance for a variety of workshops and presentations on environmental topics.

Harmful Algal Blooms

KDHE issues weekly updates to its harmful algal bloom watches, warnings and closures for Kansas ponds, lakes and rivers. KDHE works with area waterway owners to identify blue-green algae blooms and provide notice for this potentially dangerous matter. More information can be found at http://www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness/index.htm

Pollution Prevention Awards

The KDHE Pollution Prevention Awards are given to businesses and others that have made a significant improvement in protecting our environment. The 2018 winners are: Johns Manville, McPherson; Marriott Hotel, Wichita; and Smithfield Packaged Meats Corp., Junction City.

Office of the Secretary

KDHE Associate Chief Counsel Darian Dernovish was recently sworn-in as a District Judge in Shawnee County.

CONNECT WITH US

Requests for assistance for a constituent or questions on legislative matters, please contact Liz Dunn: liz.dunn@ks.gov, 785-207-3090. Questions about agency services, programs, or anything in this newsletter, please contact Gerald Kratochvil: gerald.kratochvil@ks.gov 785-296-1317.

KDHE Secretary Jeff Andersen and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Greg Lakin attended Children’s Mercy Hospital’s “Discover Children’s Mercy” event on Thursday, Aug. 16, in Kansas City, Kan.