

Testimony on KanCare Reimbursement

October 7, 2013

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

Presented by Sky Westerlund, LMSW

“Current policy requires that Medicaid reimbursable services for substance abuse in a State-licensed Alcohol and Drug Treatment Facility must be provided by a licensed addiction counselor (LAC) or a licensed clinical addiction counselor (LCAC).”

(Letter dated November 19, 2012, Community Services and Programs Commission, Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services [KDADS])

- Commercial insurance, Medicare, Tricare and private pay clients will pay licensed social workers to provide substance abuse treatment but Medicaid/KanCare will not.
- The majority of people who seek care for substance abuse have a co-occurring mental health disorder. Social workers can treat both conditions because we are authorized to treat all mental health conditions which includes substance abuse. Without treating the mental health problem, the self-medicating behavior of substance abuse will continue no matter what services are provided.
- KDADS policy mandates that already licensed practitioners must obtain a secondary license in order to be employed and work with substance abusers. That is an unnecessary expense to be paying more to the government in order to practice our profession.
- Changing the KDADS Medicaid reimbursement policy for substance abuse services to include all persons licensed by the BSRB will open the staffing pool from about 1500 to over 9000 licensed practitioners. The agencies who hire people to provide substance abuse services would be free to choose who they prefer and want to hire without interference from government.
- Most importantly, if social workers and others licensed by the BSRB are able to provide these services, then the Medicaid/KanCare recipients would be more likely to obtain intervention from the right licensed practitioner for their particular needs and circumstances. A good fit between the client and the licensed practitioner is key to successful intervention.
- The KDADS reimbursement policy must be changed without delay. It is time to get the government out of the business of provider favoritism and demanding that already licensed and competent practitioners pay more to the government just to be able to help people with a substance abuse problem.