

# KanCare gets new ombudsman

## James Bart takes different job within KDADS after one year as ombudsman

**Posted:** January 21, 2014 - 2:39pm

By [Andy Marso](#)

andy.marso@cjonline.com

James Bart has accepted a new role within the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services after spending one busy and, at times, controversial year as the state's KanCare ombudsman.

The department announced during a recent legislative hearing that Bart will be moving into the position of "director of managed care" while the ombudsman position will be filled by Kerrie Bacon, another department employee. The changes took effect Tuesday.

"James has worked tirelessly for KanCare consumers and their families as our KanCare ombudsman," said Shawn Sullivan, the department's secretary. "I know he is going to continue to bring the same effectiveness and empathy to his new duties."

Bart said Tuesday he was "highly excited" to take on his new role, which will have him addressing concerns from the health care providers under KanCare rather than from patients, as in his previous role.

"I think it's an important component of the managed care environment," Bart said, noting that as the father of a grown child with a disability on KanCare he has a vested interest in seeing the system work.

Bart's ombudsman position was a source of debate from its inception, with critics questioning how he could be an independent advocate for consumers within the KanCare managed care Medicaid plan while also working within KDADS.

Sen. Laura Kelly, D-Topeka, said Bart's role could be more accurately described as a "mediator" or "communicator."

Bart told a legislative committee in November that his office had fielded nearly 10,000 consumer complaints via phone or email, but said in a subsequent interview that he wasn't feeling "faint of heart or feeling weary under the load."

In his new role he replaces Kim Brown, who, according to a department news release, "left the agency to work in the private sector."

"She was really my mentor coming into the KanCare ombudsman position," Bart said Tuesday.

Bart said he has worked previously with Bacon and was "highly impressed" with her. He said he is working with her this week on the transition to ombudsman and believes she will fill his shoes admirably.

"I was very encouraged she was a candidate and she stood head and shoulders above the other folks who interviewed for the position," Bart said.

The news release states that Bacon has been a quality management specialist within the department for a year. Prior to that she was interim executive director of the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities and a state coordinator, research analyst and liaison at the Kansas Commission on Disability.

Sullivan called Bacon "energetic and thorough."

"Ms. Bacon brings to the position of KanCare ombudsman a great deal of experience and a profound understanding of the challenges facing individuals with disabilities," Sullivan said. "She is familiar with all of our state waiver services programs and will serve as a skilled, compassionate guide for consumers and their families who need support and assistance in navigating KanCare and the state system to get their problems solved."

Medicaid is a state-federal partnership that provides health insurance to more than 350,000 low-income Kansans, most of whom are children or pregnant women, or have disabilities.

KanCare is Gov. Sam Brownback's plan to place nearly all of the state's Medicaid services under the administration of three private insurance companies: Amerigroup, Sunflower State Health Plan (a division of Centene) and United Health Care.

KanCare clients with concerns can submit them to the ombudsman by phone toll-free at (855) 643-8180 or by email at [kancare.ombudsman@kdads.ks.gov](mailto:kancare.ombudsman@kdads.ks.gov).