

Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2155702
Decision Date:	9/14/2021	Hearing Date:	09/08/2021
Hearing Officer:	Sara E. McGrath		

Appearances for Appellant:



Appearances for MassHealth:

Dr. David Cabeceiras



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Office of Medicaid
Board of Hearings
100 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02171*

APPEAL DECISION

Appeal Decision:	Denied	Issue:	Prior Authorization for Dental Services
Decision Date:	9/14/2021	Hearing Date:	09/08/2021
MassHealth Rep.:	Dr. David Cabeceiras	Appellant Rep.:	
Hearing Location:	Board of Hearings (Remote)		

Authority

This hearing was conducted pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 118E and 30A, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

Jurisdiction

Through a notice dated July 13, 2021, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Exhibit 1). The appellant filed a timely appeal on July 26, 2021 (130 CMR 610.015(B); Exhibit 2). Denial of a request for prior authorization is a valid basis for appeal (130 CMR 610.032).

Action Taken by MassHealth

MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Issue

The appeal issue is whether MassHealth was correct, pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431(E), in determining that the appellant is ineligible for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Summary of Evidence

MassHealth was represented at hearing by Dr. David Cabeceiras, an orthodontic consultant from DentaQuest, the MassHealth dental contractor. The evidence indicates that the appellant's provider submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, together with X-rays and photographs, on July 12, 2021. As required, the provider completed the Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Form, which requires a total score of 22 or higher for approval.¹ The provider's HLD Form indicates a total score of 23, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	3	1	3
Overbite in mm	3	1	3
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	0	5	0
Open Bite in mm	0	4	0
Ectopic Eruption (# of teeth, excluding third molars)	0	3	0
Anterior Crowding ²	Maxilla: No Mandible: No	Flat score of 5 for each ³	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	17	1	17
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	No	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			23

Dr. Cabeceiras testified telephonically and stated that when DentaQuest initially evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 16. The DentaQuest HLD Form reflects the following scores:

¹ The form also includes space for providers to indicate whether, regardless of score, a patient has one of the seven conditions (described below) that would result in automatic approval, and/or to provide a narrative to explain why orthodontic treatment is otherwise medically necessary. The provider in this case did not allege the presence of an auto-qualifying condition but did indicate that treatment is medically necessary (Exhibit 3).

² The HLD Form instructs the user to record the more serious (i.e., higher score) of either the ectopic eruption **or** the anterior crowding, but not to count both scores.

³ The HLD scoring instructions state that to give points for anterior crowding, arch length insufficiency must exceed 3.5 mm.

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	4	1	4
Overbite in mm	4	1	4
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	0	5	0
Open Bite in mm	0	4	0
Ectopic Eruption (# of teeth, excluding third molars)	0	3	0
Anterior Crowding	Maxilla: No Mandible: No	Flat score of 5 for each	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	8	1	8
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	No	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			16

Because it found an HLD score below the threshold of 22, MassHealth denied the appellant's prior authorization request on July 13, 2021 (Exhibit 1).

In preparation for hearing, Dr. Cabeceiras completed an HLD Form based on a review of the photographs and X-rays submitted by the provider with the PA request. He determined that the appellant's overall HLD score was 19, calculated below:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	4	1	4
Overbite in mm	4	1	4
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	0	5	0
Open Bite in mm	0	4	0
Ectopic Eruption (# of teeth, excluding third molars)	0	3	0
Anterior Crowding	Maxilla: No Mandible: No	Flat score of 5 for each	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	11	1	11
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	No	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			19

Dr. Cabeceiras testified that the records do not show that the appellant has labio-lingual spread of 17 mm; he stated that the pictures show, at most, 11 mm of spacing. He stated that because the

appellant's HLD score is below the threshold of 22, he could not reverse the denial of the prior authorization request. He added that the appellant can resubmit the request in six months to see if there is any change.

Dr. Cabeceiras testified that the appellant's provider submitted a letter alleging that orthodontic treatment is medically necessary (Exhibit 3, p. 8). In the letter, the appellant's provider details the appellant's malocclusion, including the issue with spacing, which Dr. Cabeceiras stated does not rise to the level of medical necessity.

The appellant's mother appeared at the hearing telephonically and testified on her son's behalf with the assistance of an interpreter. She asked whether MassHealth would pay a portion of her son's orthodontic treatment; Dr. Cabeceiras responded that MassHealth does not partially pay for treatment. She stated that she feels that her son needs treatment.

Findings of Fact

Based on a preponderance of the evidence, I find the following facts:

1. On July 12, 2021, the appellant's orthodontic provider submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment to MassHealth.
2. The provider completed a Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Form for the appellant, finding an overall score of 23.
3. The provider did not allege that the appellant has any of the seven conditions that would result in automatic approval.
4. When DentaQuest initially evaluated the prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 16.
5. On July 13, 2021, MassHealth notified the appellant that the prior authorization request had been denied.
6. On July 26, 2021, the appellant filed a timely appeal of the denial.
7. In preparation for hearing on September 8, 2021, MassHealth orthodontic consultant reviewed the provider's paperwork, finding an HLD score of 19.
8. The appellant's HLD score is below the threshold score of 22.
9. The appellant's anterior spacing totals approximately 11 mm.
10. The appellant does not have any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (cleft palate, severe maxillary anterior crowding,

deep impinging overbite, anterior impaction, severe traumatic deviation, overjet greater than 9 mm, or reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm).

11. The appellant has not provided documentation that the service is otherwise medically necessary based on a severe deviation affecting the patient's mouth and/or underlying dentofacial structures; a diagnosed mental, emotional, or behavioral condition caused by the patient's malocclusion; a diagnosed nutritional deficiency and/or a substantiated inability to eat or chew caused by the patient's malocclusion; a diagnosed speech or language pathology caused by the patient's malocclusion; or a condition in which the overall severity or impact of the patient's malocclusion is not otherwise apparent.

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

130 CMR 420.431(E) states, in relevant part, as follows:

The MassHealth agency pays for comprehensive orthodontic treatment only once per member under age 21 per lifetime and only when the member has a severe and handicapping malocclusion. The MassHealth agency determines whether a malocclusion is severe and handicapping based on the clinical standards described in Appendix D of the *Dental Manual*.

Appendix D of the Dental Manual is the "Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations Form" (HLD), which is described as a quantitative, objective method for measuring malocclusion. The HLD index provides a single score, based on a series of measurements that represent the degree to which a case deviates from normal alignment and occlusion. MassHealth has determined that a score of 22 or higher signifies a severe and handicapping malocclusion.

MassHealth will also approve a prior authorization request, without regard for the HLD numerical score, in two other circumstances: First, MassHealth will approve a request if there is evidence of a cleft palate, severe maxillary anterior crowding, deep impinging overbite, anterior impaction, severe traumatic deviation, overjet greater than 9 mm, or reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm. Second, providers may establish that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary by submitting a medical necessity narrative that establishes that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary to treat a handicapping malocclusion, including to correct or significantly ameliorate one of the following:

- A severe deviation affecting the patient's mouth and/or underlying dentofacial structures;
 - A diagnosed mental, emotional, or behavioral condition caused by the patient's malocclusion;
 - A diagnosed nutritional deficiency and/or a substantiated inability to eat or chew caused by the patient's malocclusion;
 - A diagnosed speech or language pathology caused by the patient's malocclusion;
- or

- A condition in which the overall severity or impact of the patient's malocclusion is not otherwise apparent.

The medical necessity narrative must clearly demonstrate why comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary for the patient. If any part of the requesting provider's justification of medical necessity involves a mental, emotional, or behavioral condition; a nutritional deficiency; a speech or language pathology; or the presence of any other condition that would typically require the diagnosis, opinion, or expertise of a licensed clinician other than the requesting provider, then the narrative and any attached documentation must:

- clearly identify the appropriately qualified and licensed clinician(s) who furnished the diagnosis or opinion substantiating the condition or pathology (e.g., general dentist, oral surgeon, physician, clinical psychologist, clinical dietitian, speech therapist);
- describe the nature and extent of the identified clinician(s) involvement and interaction with the patient, including dates of treatment;
- state the specific diagnosis or other opinion of the patient's condition furnished by the identified clinician(s);
- document the recommendation by the clinician(s) to seek orthodontic evaluation or treatment (if such a recommendation was made);
- discuss any treatments for the patient's condition (other than comprehensive orthodontic treatment) considered or attempted by the clinician(s); and
- provide any other relevant information from the clinician(s) that supports the requesting provider's justification of the medical necessity of comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

The appellant's provider found an overall HLD score of 23. After reviewing the documents included with the provider's submission, MassHealth calculated a score of 16. Upon review of the prior authorization documents, a different orthodontic consultant for MassHealth found the HLD score was 19. After reviewing the prior authorization documents, I am persuaded by MassHealth's determination that the HLD score is below 22. The main difference is in the scoring of the labio-lingual spread, which relates to anterior spacing. Based on the photographs, MassHealth's measurement of 11 mm is more credible than the provider's recorded score of 17 mm. When combined with the other areas of the HLD scoring tool, the total score is below the threshold of 22.⁴

Further, the appellant has not demonstrated that orthodontic treatment is otherwise medically necessary. While the above list of examples is not necessarily an exhaustive list, its contents make clear that an authorization based on medical necessity requires more than the existence of a malocclusion that would be improved with orthodontic treatment. To suggest otherwise would render the HLD index scoring system meaningless. The appellant's provider submitted a medical

⁴ The provider did not allege, nor did MassHealth find, that the appellant has any of the auto-qualifying conditions as set forth in Appendix D of the Dental Manual.

necessity narrative that describes his malocclusion, but does not include any evidence of, for example, a diagnosed mental, emotional, or behavioral condition caused by the patient's malocclusion, or a diagnosed nutritional deficiency (Exhibit 3, p. 8). Without more, the appellant has not demonstrated that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is a medical necessity at this time.

The appellant has not demonstrated that he meets the MassHealth criteria for approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment. MassHealth's denial of the prior authorization request was proper.

For the foregoing reasons, this appeal is denied.

Order for MassHealth

None.

Notification of Your Right to Appeal to Court

If you disagree with this decision, you have the right to appeal to Court in accordance with Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws. To appeal, you must file a complaint with the Superior Court for the county where you reside, or Suffolk County Superior Court, within 30 days of your receipt of this decision.

Sara E. McGrath
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

cc: DentaQuest