

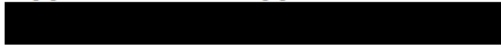
Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2155733
Decision Date:	9/27/2021	Hearing Date:	09/08/2021
Hearing Officer:	Rebecca Brochstein		

Appearances for Appellant:



Appearances for MassHealth:

Dr. Carl Perlmutter



*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 Approval for Orthodonture
Decision Date:	9/27/2021	Hearing Date:	09/08/2021
MassHealth Rep.:	Dr. Carl Perlmutter	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 June 21, 2021, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Exhibit 1). The appellant filed a timely appeal on July 22, 2021 (130 CMR 610.015(B); Exhibit 2). Denial of a request for prior approval 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(C), in determining that the appellant is ineligible for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Summary of Evidence

MassHealth was represented at hearing by Dr. Carl Perlmutter, 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 June 21, 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 22, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	7	1	7
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 ²	Maxilla: Mandible:	Flat score of 5 for each ³	5
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	6	1	6
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	No	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			22

Dr. Perlmutter testified that when DentaQuest initially evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, a consulting orthodontist determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 16. The DentaQuest HLD Form reflects the following findings:

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 alleged the presence of an auto-qualifying condition but did not complete a medical necessity narrative. See Exhibit 4.

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	8	1	8
Overbite in mm	6	1	6
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)	2	1	2
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	n/a	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 June 21, 2021. See Exhibit 1.

At hearing, Dr. Perlmutter testified that he carefully examined the photographs and X-rays that were submitted by the provider and came up with his own HLD score of 19. His scores are as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	6	1	6
Overbite in mm	6	1	6
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: Yes Mandible: No	Flat score of 5 for each	5
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	2	1	2
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	n/a	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior Impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			19

Dr. Perlmutter pointed out that the provider found six points for labio-lingual spread. He testified

that this category is measured either as the amount of spacing between the teeth or how much it would take to bring the “worst tooth” into alignment with the arch. Pointing to the photographs, he stated that because the appellant has crowding, not spacing, in his teeth, the labio-lingual spacing scoring is based on the second of these types of measurements—and that it would take only two millimeters, not six, to bring the most misaligned tooth into alignment with the rest of the arch. Dr. Perlmutter testified that because the appellant’s total HLD score is below 22, and he also does not satisfy the criteria for any of the automatic qualifying conditions, he was unable to reverse the denial of the prior authorization request.

The appellant’s mother appeared at the hearing telephonically. She testified that she does not know much about orthodontics, but that she brought her children to the orthodontist together and her daughter was approved and her son was denied. She stated that she is confused because she believed her son’s condition is worse, and that he clearly does need braces. The mother stated that she is just trying to do her job as a parent.

Findings of Fact

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

1. On June 21, 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 22.
3. When DentaQuest initially evaluated the prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, an orthodontic consultant determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 16.
4. On June 21, 2021, MassHealth notified the appellant that the prior authorization request had been denied.
5. On July 22, 2021, the appellant filed a timely appeal of the denial.
6. In preparation for hearing on September 8, 2021, MassHealth orthodontic consultant reviewed the provider’s paperwork, finding an HLD score of 19.
7. The appellant’s score for labio-lingual spread does not exceed two points.
8. The appellant’s total HLD score is below the threshold score of 22.
9. 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).

10. The appellant has not established 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(C) states, in relevant part, as follows:

The MassHealth agency pays for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, subject to prior authorization, once per member per lifetime younger than 21 years old and only when the member has a handicapping malocclusion. The MassHealth agency determines whether a malocclusion is handicapping based on clinical standards for medical necessity as described in Appendix D of the *Dental Manual*.

Appendix D of the Dental Manual is the "MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations Index" (HLD), which is described as a quantitative, objective method for measuring PA requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. The HLD allows for the identification of certain auto-qualifying conditions and provides a single score, based on a series of measurements, which represent the presence, absence, and degree of handicap. MassHealth has determined that a score of 22 or higher signifies a 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 one or more auto-qualifying conditions: 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 22. After reviewing 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. The main discrepancy in the scores is the provider's finding of labio-lingual spread. The MassHealth Dental Program Office Reference Manual instructs MassHealth orthodontic providers to score labio-lingual spread as follows:

Labio-Lingual Spread: The measurement tool is used to determine the extent of deviation from a normal arch. Where there is only a protruded or lingually displaced anterior tooth, the measurement should be made from the incisal edge of that tooth to the normal arch line. Otherwise, the total distance between the most protruded tooth and the lingually displaced anterior tooth is measured. The labio-lingual spread probably comes close to a measurement of overall deviation from what would have been a normal arch. In the event that multiple anterior crowding of teeth is observed, all deviations from the normal arch should be measured for

labio-lingual spread, but only the most severe individual measurement should be entered on the index.

Using this method of measurement, the photographic evidence supports MassHealth's finding that the most misaligned tooth is no more than two millimeters out of alignment with the rest of the arch. The provider's determination that the labio-lingual spread measures six millimeters is not consistent with the evidence. It was therefore correct to assign a score of two for the labio-lingual spread, which brings the total HLD score below 22.

There is also no evidence that the appellant has any of the other conditions that result in automatic approval without regard for the HLD numerical score (i.e., 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.). Further, the provider did not allege, nor did MassHealth find, that treatment is otherwise medically necessary as set forth in Appendix D of the Dental Manual.

As such, 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.

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.

Rebecca Brochstein
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

cc: DentaQuest