

Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2206619
Decision Date:	11/9/2022	Hearing Date:	10/03/2022
Hearing Officer:	Marc Tonaszuck	Record Open to:	10/28/2022

Appearance for Appellant:



Appearance for MassHealth:
Dr. Harold Kaplan, DentaQuest



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

APPEAL DECISION

Appeal Decision:	Denied	Issue:	Orthodontics
Decision Date:	11/9/2022	Hearing Date:	10/03/2022
MassHealth's Rep.:	Dr. Harold Kaplan, DentaQuest	Appellant's Rep.:	Mother
Hearing Location:	Quincy Harbor South		

Authority

This hearing was conducted pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 119E and 30A, and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

Jurisdiction

Through a notice dated 08/08/2022 MassHealth informed the appellant that it denied his request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Exhibit 1). A timely appeal was filed on the appellant's behalf¹ on 08/31/2022² (130 CMR 610.015(B); Exhibit 2). Denial of a request for prior approval is a valid basis for appeal (130 CMR 610.032).

A fair hearing took place on 10/03/2022, at which time, the appellant's representative requested an opportunity to submit additional documentation in support of his appeal. Her request was granted and the record remained open in this matter until 10/21/2022 for her submission and until 10/28/2022 for MassHealth's response (Exhibits 5 and 6).

¹ Appellant is a minor appellant represented in these proceedings by his mother.

² In MassHealth Eligibility Operations Memo (EOM) 20-09 dated 04/07/2020, MassHealth states the following:

- Regarding Fair Hearings during the COVID-19 outbreak national emergency, and through the end of month in which such national emergency period ends;
 - All appeal hearings will be telephonic; and
 - Individuals will have up to 120 days, instead of the standard 30 days, to request a fair hearing for member eligibility-related concerns.

Action Taken by MassHealth

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

Issue

Did MassHealth correctly deny the appellant's prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment to pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431(C)?

Summary of Evidence

The MassHealth orthodontic consultant, a licensed orthodontist from DentaQuest, testified that the appellant's provider requested prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. The representative stated that MassHealth only provides coverage for comprehensive orthodontic treatment when there is a severe and handicapping malocclusion. He testified that the orthodontic provider submitted a prior authorization request on behalf of the appellant, who is under 21 years of age. The request was considered after review of the oral photographs and written information submitted by the appellant's orthodontic provider. This information was applied to a standardized Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Index that is used to make an objective determination of whether the appellant has a severe and handicapping malocclusion. The representative testified that the HLD Index uses objective measurements taken from the subject's teeth to generate an overall numeric score. A severe and handicapping malocclusion is typically reflected by a minimum score of 22. MassHealth submitted into evidence: HLD MassHealth Form, the HLD Index (Exhibit 4).

MassHealth testified that according to the prior authorization request, the appellant's orthodontic provider reported that the appellant had an HLD score of 19, which did not reach the minimum score of 22 required for MassHealth payment of the orthodonture. Additionally, the provider noted that there was no auto-qualifying situation indicated on the HLD Index form and no additional "medical necessity" documentation included with the request.

DentaQuest, acting on behalf of MassHealth, received the PA request on 08/04/2022. DentaQuest denied the request for comprehensive orthodontics, finding that the appellant's HLD Index score was below 22, that there is no automatic qualifying condition, and no documentation of medical necessity.

The DentaQuest orthodontist testified that in preparation for the fair hearing, he reviewed the appellant's materials that were provided to MassHealth with the prior authorization request from his orthodontist. According to the photographs and X-rays, the DentaQuest orthodontist testified that his review confirmed the provider's conclusion that the

appellant's HLD score did not reach the score of 22 necessary for a determination that of a severe and handicapping malocclusion. He testified that there was no information provided to show that a different result is warranted. As a result, he upheld MassHealth's denial of the request for comprehensive orthodontic services. He also stated that three orthodontists reviewed this submission, including one selected by the appellant's mother. None of the orthodontists involved found that the appellant's score reached the minimum necessary for MassHealth payment of his orthodontics.

The appellant's mother appeared at the fair hearing telephonically and testified that the last time the appellant was examined for his request for braces, he had an HLD Index score of 17. This time it's 19. She testified that the appellant's mouth does not completely close on one side. She believes that in time, his canine teeth will wear down and will negatively affect his bite. The mother testified that the appellant is now at the age where he needs to have his bite corrected.

Dr. Kaplan responded that the situation the mother referred to was taken into consideration as an "open bite," scoring 4 points. Even with this score, the total did not meet the minimum required score of 22.

The appellant's mother requested an opportunity to supplement the hearing record with additional documentation from the appellant's orthodontist. Her request was granted and the record was initially held open until 10/10/2022 for her submission and until 10/17/2022 for MassHealth's response (Exhibit 5). On 10/07/2022, the appellant's mother requested an extension of time to submit the materials. Her request was granted and the record open period was extended, as requested, to 10/21/2022 for the appellant's submission and until 10/28/2022 for MassHealth's response (Exhibit 6).

On 10/17/2022, a submission was made on the appellant's behalf by the orthodontist's office. In the submission, the orthodontist submitted a newly scored HLD Index form, showing an HLD Index score of 15. There was no automatic qualifying condition noted, nor was there a medical necessity narrative attached (Exhibit 7).

On 10/17/2022, Dr. Kaplan responded to the appellant's submission by stating that the HLD Index score did not meet the minimum required score of 22 for MassHealth to pay for the appellant's comprehensive orthodontic treatment. As a result, the case remained denied (Exhibit 8).

Findings of Fact

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

1. The appellant is under 21 years of age (Testimony).
2. On 08/04/2022, the appellant's orthodontic provider requested prior authorization for

comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Testimony, Exhibit 4).

3. MassHealth provides coverage for comprehensive orthodontic treatment only when there is a severe and handicapping malocclusion.
4. As one determinant of a severe and handicapping malocclusion, MassHealth employs a system of comparative measurements known as the HLD Index.
5. A HLD Index score of 22 or higher denotes a severe and handicapping malocclusion.
6. The appellant's orthodontic provider provided an HLD score of 19, based on measurements she took of the appellant's malocclusion.
7. The appellant's orthodontic provider did not allege that the appellant had an automatic qualifying condition, nor did she attach a medical necessity narrative to the prior authorization request.
8. DentaQuest reviewed the treating orthodontist's submission and agreed that the appellant's malocclusion did not meet MassHealth's requirements for payment for his comprehensive orthodontic treatment.
9. DentaQuest, on behalf of MassHealth, denied the appellant's request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment on 08/08/2022.
10. Using measurements taken from the appellant's oral photographs, X-rays and other submitted materials, the MassHealth representative, a licensed orthodontist, determined that the appellant did not have a an HLD score of 22 or above or an automatic qualifying condition.
11. At the fair hearing, the appellant's mother requested an opportunity to submit additional documentation supporting the appellant's appeal. Her request was granted and the record remained open in this matter until 10/21/2022 for her submission and until 10/28/2022 for MassHealth's response.
12. During the record open period, the appellant's orthodontist submitted a newly score HLD Index form and photographs. The appellant's orthodontist calculated an HLD Index score of 15, indicated there were no automatic qualifying conditions and did not include a medical necessity narrative (Exhibit 7).
13. The MassHealth orthodontist concluded that the appellant does not have a severe and handicapping malocclusion.

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

Regulation 130 CMR 420.431(C) 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*.

When requesting prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, the provider submits, among other things, a completed HLD Index recording form which documents the results of applying the clinical standards described in Appendix D of the Dental Manual. In order for MassHealth to pay for orthodontic treatment, the appellant's malocclusion must be severe and handicapping as indicated by an automatic qualifier on the HLD index or a minimum HLD index score of 22.

In this case, the appellant's treating orthodontist calculated an overall HLD Index score of 19, well below the threshold of 22 necessary for MassHealth payment for comprehensive orthodontics. During the record open period, the appellant's orthodontist resubmitted the HLD Index form with a calculated HLD Index score of 15. On neither of the appellant's submissions was there an indication of an automatic qualifying condition or was there a medical necessity narrative attached.

The MassHealth representative testified that he agreed with the appellant's provider in that the HLD score did not reach or exceed a 22. In addition, he testified credibly that no other information was provided to show medical necessity.

The appellant's mother testified that the appellant has some issues that may or may not be connected to his need for orthodonture. However, the appellant's provider, who was chosen by the appellant, indicated on the HLD Index form that there was no medical necessity documentation included with the PA request. Further, when provided with an opportunity to submit additional documentation to support the appellant's request for the orthodontics, the appellant's provider submitted an HLD Index score that again did not reach the minimum required for MassHealth payment of the appellant's braces. It is the burden of the appellant (or his appeal representative) to show that there exists a medical necessity for the requested comprehensive orthodonture. There is nothing in the hearing record to show that the appellant's current situation meets MassHealth criteria for payment of braces. In fact, all the orthodontists, including the treating orthodontist selected by the appellant, agree that the appellant's malocclusion does not meet the criteria for approval by MassHealth. Accordingly, 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.

Marc Tonaszuck
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

cc: MassHealth Representative: DentaQuest 1, MA