

Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision: Denied

Appeal Number: 2207955

Decision Date: 12/28/2022

Hearing Date: 12/14/2022

Hearing Officer: Marc Tonaszuck

Appearance for Appellant:



Appearance for MassHealth:

Dr. Carl Perlmutter, 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:	12/28/2022	Hearing Date:	12/14/2022
MassHealth's Rep.:	Dr. Carl Perlmutter, DentaQuest	Appellant's Rep.:	Uncle
Hearing Location:	Quincy		

Authority

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

Jurisdiction

Through a notice dated 09/27/2022, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (see 130 CMR 420.431 and Exhibits 1 and 4). On 10/21/2022 a timely appeal was filed on the appellant's behalf (see 130 CMR 610.015(B) and Exhibit 2)¹. Denial of a request for prior approval is a valid basis for appeal (see 130 CMR 610.032).

¹ In MassHealth Eligibility Operations Memo (EOM) 20-09 dated April 7, 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

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

The appellant is a minor MassHealth member whose uncle appeared as the appeal representative at hearing via telephone. MassHealth was represented at hearing by Dr. Carl Perlmutter, also by telephone, an orthodontic consultant from DentaQuest, the MassHealth dental contractor.

The appellant's provider submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, including photographs and X-rays on 09/27/2022. As required, the provider completed the MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations ("HLD") Form, which requires a total score of 22 or higher for approval or that the appellant has one of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment ("autoqualifier"). The provider indicated that the appellant has an HLD score of 22, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	5	1	5
Overbite in mm	7	1	7
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: 5 Mandible: 5	Flat score of 5 for each	10
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	4	1	4
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	1	Flat score of 4 for each	4
Posterior Impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth (excluding 3 rd molars)	0	3	0

Total HLD Score			30
------------------------	--	--	-----------

The appellant's orthodontist did not identify any autoqualifier, nor did he include a medical necessity narrative.

When DentaQuest evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 10. The DentaQuest HLD Form reflects the following scores:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	3	1	3
Overbite in mm	5	1	5
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: 0 Mandible: 0	Flat score of 5 for each	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	2	1	2
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	0	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior Impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth (excluding 3 rd molars)	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			10

DentaQuest did not find an autoqualifier. Because it found an HLD score below the threshold of 22 and no autoqualifier, MassHealth denied the appellant's prior authorization request on 09/27/2022.

At hearing, Dr. Perlmutter testified that the appellant has an HLD score of 15, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	5	1	5
Overbite in mm	7	1	7
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: 0 Mandible: 0	Flat score of 5 for each	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	3	1	3
Posterior Unilateral Crossbite	0	Flat score of 4	0
Posterior Impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth (excluding 3 rd molars)	0	3	0
Total HLD Score			15

The MassHealth orthodontist also testified that there are no autoqualifiers. He concluded that his measurements do not support an HLD score of 22. Therefore, MassHealth could not approve the appellant's request for comprehensive orthodontics.

The appellant's uncle testified that he represented the appellant because the appellant's mother does not speak English well. He did not request a foreign-language interpreter. The uncle testified that the appellant cannot chew her food properly. She can only chew on one side because the other side has "crooked teeth" and the food cannot be chewed on that side. It "gets stuck." He stated that the appellant is not suffering any malnutrition due to her inability to chew food properly. The uncle is afraid that the appellant will develop TMJ in the future, like her grandmother has.

Dr. Perlmutter responded that the appellant's malocclusion scores a "very low number" on the HLD Index score sheet. He stated that "nobody said her teeth were perfect." With respect to the uncle's concern about future TMJ, Dr. Perlmutter stated that MassHealth "does not deal with future problems," and that if the appellant develops TMJ as a result of her malocclusion, she should re-apply for orthodonture.

Findings of Fact

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

1. On 09/27/2022 the appellant's orthodontic provider submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment to MassHealth (Exhibit 4).
2. The provider completed a Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations Form for the appellant, calculated an HLD score of 30 points. He did not indicate that any automatic qualifying conditions exist (Exhibit 4).
3. The provider did not include a medical necessity narrative with the prior authorization

request (Exhibit 4).

4. When DentaQuest evaluated the prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 15, with no automatic qualifying condition (Exhibit 4).
5. MassHealth approves requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment when the member has an HLD score of 22 or more (Testimony).
6. On 09/27/2022, MassHealth notified the appellant that the prior authorization request had been denied (Exhibits 1 and 4).
7. On 10/21/2022, the appellant filed a timely appeal of the denial (Exhibit 2).
8. On 12/14/2022, a fair hearing took place before the Board of Hearings.
9. At the fair hearing, a MassHealth orthodontic consultant reviewed the provider's paperwork, photographs, and X-rays and found an HLD score of 15 (Testimony).
10. In order to score 5 points for "anterior crowding," on either the upper (maxillary) or lower (mandibular) arch, a member must have at least 3.5 mm of crowding among the front (anterior) six teeth (Testimony; Exhibit 4).
11. The appellant does not have at least 3.5 mm of crowding among the anterior teeth on the maxillary or mandibular arch (Testimony).
12. A cross bite is defined as when a member has a back (posterior) top tooth that bites inside the corresponding lower tooth (Testimony; Exhibit 4).
13. The appellant does not have a crossbite (Testimony).
14. The appellant's HLD score is below 22 (Testimony).
15. The appellant does not have any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (e.g., cleft palate, impinging overbite, impaction, severe traumatic deviation, overjet greater than 9 mm, reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm, crowding greater than 10 mm on either arch, or spacing greater than 10 mm on either arch, anterior or posterior crossbite of 3 or more teeth, 2 or more congenital missing teeth, or an anterior open bite greater than 2 mm. involving 4 or more teeth).

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 under the age of 21 and only when the member has a handicapping malocclusion. The MassHealth agency determines whether a malocclusion is handicapping based on the clinical standards for medical necessity as 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, if there is evidence of a cleft palate, deep impinging overbite, impactions, severe traumatic deviation, overjet greater than 9 mm, reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm, crowding or spacing greater than 10 mm, anterior or posterior crossbite of three or more teeth on either arch, two or more congenitally missing teeth, or lateral open bite greater than 2 mm of four or more teeth.

The appellant’s provider documented that the appellant has an HLD score of 30 with no autoqualifier. Upon receipt of the PA request and after reviewing the provider’s submission, MassHealth found an HLD score of 10 and no autoqualifier. At hearing, upon review of the prior authorization documents, a different orthodontic consultant found an HLD score of 15 and no automatic qualifying condition.

The main difference between the appellant’s provider’s score and Dr. Perlmutter’s score are the scoring of the anterior crowding and the crossbite. In order for the malocclusion to score in the category of anterior crowding, there must be at least 3.5 mm of crowding in the anterior (front) six teeth on either arch. The appellant’s orthodontist checked off that the appellant has at least 3.5 mm of crowding on both the top and the bottom arches, scoring 10 points (5 for each arch). Dr. Perlmutter testified that the appellant does not have at least 3.5 mm of crowding in the anterior region of either arch. Therefore, he could not score points for anterior crowding, as documented by the treating orthodontist. He explained his scores to the appellant’s uncle and to the hearing officer, referencing the photographs of the appellant’s teeth that were included with the PA request.

Dr. Perlmutter next addressed the treating orthodontist’s assertion that the appellant has a posterior crossbite. Dr. Perlmutter testified that he reviewed the appellant’s submission carefully with the use of electronic images and a magnifying glass. He stated he could find

no instance of a posterior crossbite. As a result, he could not score 4 points for this condition. Without the scores for anterior crowding (10 points) and a posterior crossbite (4 points), the appellant's HLD Index score falls significantly below the 22 point threshold needed for MassHealth to pay for the comprehensive orthodontic services.

Dr. Perlmutter's score is supported by the photographs and X-rays. He is a licensed orthodontist and he demonstrated a familiarity with the HLD Index. His measurements are credible and his determination of the overall HLD score is consistent with the evidence. Moreover, he was available to be questioned by the hearing officer and cross-examined by the appellant's representative.

The appellant's uncle testified credibly that the appellant would benefit from orthodonture; however, he was unable to show that the appellant met the requirements set out by MassHealth for approval for payment of the orthodonture. Additionally, the uncle asserted that the appellant has difficulty eating; however, he did not draw a connection between the appellant's inability to chew properly and her malocclusion. Absent from the hearing record is evidence that comprehensive orthodonture is medically necessary to improve the appellant's medical condition. Accordingly, MassHealth's testimony is given greater weight. As the appellant does not qualify for comprehensive orthodontic treatment under the HLD guidelines, MassHealth was correct in determining that she does not have a severe and handicapping malocclusion. Accordingly, MassHealth correctly denied this request for comprehensive orthodontic services and 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

[REDACTED]