

Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision: Denied

Appeal Number: 2300673

Decision Date: 4/12/2023

Hearing Date: 03/06/2023

Hearing Officer: Mariah Burns

Appearance for Appellant:



Appearance for MassHealth:

Dr. Harold Kaplan for 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:	Prior Authorization - Orthodontics
Decision Date:	4/12/2023	Hearing Date:	03/06/2023
MassHealth's Rep.:	Dr. Harold Kaplan	Appellant's Rep.:	[REDACTED]
Hearing Location:	Remote		

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 November 14, 2022, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Exhibit 1). The appellant filed this appeal in a timely manner on January 25, 2023 (see 130 CMR 610.015(B) and Exhibit 2). Denial of a request for prior authorization is a valid basis for appeal (see 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 within its discretion in determining that the appellant is ineligible for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Summary of Evidence

The appellant, a minor under the age of 21, was represented at hearing by a parent. The MassHealth representative, a licensed orthodontist, appeared for MassHealth on behalf of DentaQuest, the MassHealth dental contractor. Below is a summary of each party's testimony and

the information submitted for hearing:

The appellant's orthodontic provider ("the provider") submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment to DentaQuest on behalf of the appellant on November 11, 2022. This request included the appellant's X-rays, photographs, and a completed MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Form.

MassHealth will only provide coverage for comprehensive orthodontic treatment for members who have a "severe, handicapping, or deforming" malocclusion. Such a condition exists when the applicant has either (1) dental discrepancies that result in a score of 22 or more points on the HLD Form, as detailed in the MassHealth Dental Manual, or (2) evidence of a group of exceptional or handicapping dental conditions. If the applicant meets any of these qualifications, MassHealth, through DentaQuest, will approve a request for prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Alternatively, a provider, such as the applicant's primary care physician or pediatrician, can submit a narrative and supporting documentation detailing how the treatment is medically necessary.

In this case, the appellant's provider did not submit an HLD score or a medical necessity narrative, but instead indicated on the HLD form that the appellant auto-qualifies for treatment because he has spacing of 10mm or more in the mandibular arch.

When DentaQuest initially evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists did not find any of the conditions that would warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment and determined that the appellant has an HLD score of 13. The DentaQuest HLD Form reflects the following scores:

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

¹ It appears that the DentaQuest reviewer only indicated the weighted score and not the raw score in their assessment.

Total HLD Score			13
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Exhibit 4 at 7. Having found an HLD score below the threshold of 22, no auto-qualifying conditions, and no medical necessity, MassHealth denied the appellant's prior authorization request.

At hearing, the MassHealth representative testified that based on careful review of the x-rays and photographs, he found that the appellant's HLD score was, at best, a 14. He also disagreed with the provider's evaluation that the appellant had an auto-qualifying condition of 10 mm of spacing in the mandibular or maxillary arch. He found 8 mm total spacing on the maxillary arch and 7 mm total spacing on the mandibular arch. As a result, while he found more points than the initial DentaQuest reviewer, he did not see enough evidence in the prior authorization request to overturn the decision of a denial.

The appellant's mother testified that he is an identical twin with the exact same issue and the exact same mouth who was approved for braces. In fact, the family's orthodontist thought that the appellant's spacing was worse than his twin's. She explained that the appellant is a self-conscious, quieter kid who does not talk to anybody or smile often, but that he does not seem to have much stress about the positioning of his teeth.

Findings of Fact

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

1. The appellant's provider requested prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment and submitted an Orthodontics Prior Authorization Form, an HLD Form, photographs and x-rays. Exhibit 4.
2. The provider found that the appellant possesses an auto-qualifying condition of 10 mm or more of spacing in the mandibular or maxillary arch, did not calculate an HLD score, and declined to submit a medical necessity narrative. *Id.* at 9-14.
3. On November 14, 2022, MassHealth denied the appellant's prior authorization request, as DentaQuest found an HLD score of 13 and did not agree that there was evidence of any auto-qualifying condition. Exhibit 1, Exhibit 4 at 7.
4. The appellant timely appealed the denial to the Board of Hearings. Exhibit 2.
5. The MassHealth representative testified to finding an HLD score of 14 with no exceptional handicapping dental condition.
6. The MassHealth representative testified that he found 8 mm of maxillary spacing and 7 mm of mandibular crowding.

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

MassHealth pays only for medically necessary services to eligible MassHealth members and may require that medical necessity be established through the prior authorization process. 130 CMR 420.410(A)(1). A service is "medically necessary" if:

- (1) it is reasonably calculated to prevent, diagnose, prevent the worsening of, alleviate, correct, or cure conditions in the member that endanger life, cause suffering or pain, cause physical deformity or malfunction, threaten to cause or to aggravate a handicap, or result in illness or infirmity; and
- (2) there is no other medical service or site of service, comparable in effect, available, and suitable for the member requesting the service, that is more conservative or less costly to MassHealth.

130 CMR 450.204(A). Medical necessity for dental and orthodontic treatment must be shown in accordance with the regulations governing dental treatment codified at 130 CMR 420.000 and in the MassHealth *Dental Manual*. Specifically, 130 CMR 420.431(C)(3) states, in relevant part:

The MassHealth agency pays for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, subject to prior authorization, only once per member per lifetime for a member 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*.

Those clinical standards for medical necessity are met when (1) the member has one of the "auto-qualifying" conditions described by MassHealth in the HLD Form,² (2) the member meets or exceeds the threshold score designated by MassHealth on the HLD Form, or (3) comprehensive orthodontic treatment is otherwise medically necessary for the member, as demonstrated by a medical-necessity narrative and supporting documentation submitted by the requesting provider. *See generally*, Appendix D of the *Dental Manual*. In such circumstances, MassHealth will approve payment for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. 130 CMR 420.431(C)(3).

Appendix D of the *Dental Manual* includes the HLD form, which is described as "a quantitative, objective method for evaluating [prior authorization] requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment." Appendix D at D-1. The HLD form allows for the identification of those auto-qualifying conditions and also provides the method for discerning a single score, "based on a series of measurements, which represent the presence, absence, and degree of handicap." *Id.* MassHealth will authorize treatment for cases with verified auto-qualifiers or verified scores of 22 and above.

² Auto-qualifying conditions include cleft palate, severe traumatic deviation, severe maxillary or mandibular crowding or spacing, deep impinging overbite, anterior impaction, overjet greater than 9 mm, or reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm, anterior or posterior crossbite of 3 or more maxillary teeth per arch, 2 or more of at least one congenitally missing tooth per quadrant, and anterior or lateral open bite of 2mm or more or 4 or more teeth per arch. Appendix D at D-2 and D-5.

Id. at D-2.

Providers may also establish eligibility for comprehensive orthodontic treatment by submitting a medical necessity narrative from a physician that indicates that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary to treat a handicapping malocclusion, including to correct or significantly ameliorate certain medical or dental conditions. *Id.* at D-3-4.

While a MassHealth member may benefit from orthodontic treatment, the regulations clearly limit eligibility for such treatment to patients with handicapping malocclusions. 130 CMR 420.431(C)(3). As such, the appellant bears the burden of showing that he has an HLD score of 22 or higher, an auto-qualifying condition, or that the treatment is otherwise medically necessary. He has failed to do so.

The MassHealth representative's sworn testimony is that although his review of the appellant's records result in a higher HLD score than the MassHealth initial reviewer, he is still only able to determine deviations indicating a score of 14. He credibly explained why he did not find the same auto-qualifying condition as the provider. Although the appellant's mother indicated that the appellant's twin was approved for treatment despite the family orthodontist believing that the appellant's bite was worse, only the appellant's records were submitted as evidence and the provider orthodontist did not testify at hearing. Further, the appellant's provider did not submit a medical necessity narrative, nor did they submit an HLD score. MassHealth was thereby within its discretion to deny the appellant's request for prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. This appeal is denied.

If the appellant's dental condition should worsen or her orthodontist is able to provide the necessary documentation to demonstrate that the treatment is medically necessary, a new prior authorization request can be filed at that time.

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.

Mariah Burns
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

cc:
MassHealth Representative: DentaQuest 1, MA