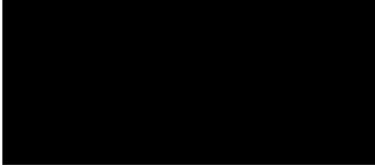


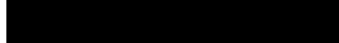
# Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

**Appellant Name and Address:**



<b>Appeal Decision:</b>	Denied	<b>Appeal Number:</b>	2306318
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/07/2023	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	09/06/2023
<b>Hearing Officer:</b>	Patricia Mullen		

**Appearances for Appellant:**



**Appearance for MassHealth:**

Dr. Cabeceiras, 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

<b>Appeal Decision:</b>	Denied	<b>Issue:</b>	Orthodontic coverage
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/07/2023	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	09/06/2023
<b>MassHealth's Rep.:</b>	Dr. Cabeceiras, DentaQuest	<b>Appellant's Reps.:</b>	Pro se; [REDACTED]
<b>Hearing Location:</b>	Quincy Harbor South		

### 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 July 20, 2023, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization for orthodontic treatment because MassHealth determined that the appellant does not have a handicapping malocclusion as is required by MassHealth regulations for orthodontic coverage. (130 CMR 420.431 and Exhibit 1). The appellant filed this appeal in a timely manner on July 31, 2023. (130 CMR 610.015(B) and Exhibit 2). Denial of prior authorization is valid grounds for appeal. (130 CMR 610.032).

### Action Taken by MassHealth

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

### Issue

The appeal issue is whether MassHealth was correct, pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431, in determining that the appellant does not meet the MassHealth requirements for coverage of

orthodontic treatment.

## Summary of Evidence

The appellant is a child and appeared at the hearing with her mother. The appellant's mother verified the appellant's identity. MassHealth was represented by an orthodontist consultant with DentaQuest, the contracted agent of MassHealth that makes the dental prior authorization determinations. The appellant's orthodontist submitted a request for prior authorization for orthodontic treatment for the appellant on July 17, 2023. (Exhibit 5, p. 3). The appellant's orthodontist completed an Orthodontics Prior Authorization Form and a MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Form and submitted these along with photographs and x-rays of the appellant's mouth. (Exhibit 5). The appellant's orthodontist noted that a medical necessity narrative would not be submitted. (Exhibit 5, p. 10).

The MassHealth representative testified that MassHealth only covers orthodontic treatment when the member has a handicapping malocclusion. The HLD form lists 13 autoqualifiers and 9 characteristics, such as bite and crowding, with corresponding numerical values. (Exhibit 5, p. 9). If a member has any of the 13 autoqualifiers or a HLD score of 22 or higher, the member meets the criteria for a handicapping malocclusion. (Testimony, exhibit 5, p. 9). The 13 autoqualifiers are a cleft lip/palate; impinging overbite with evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue; impactions where eruption is impeded but extraction is not indicated (excluding 3<sup>rd</sup> molars); severe traumatic deviations; overjet greater than 9 millimeters; reverse overjet greater than 3.5 millimeters; crowding of 10 mm or more, in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding 3<sup>rd</sup> molars); spacing of 10 mm or more, in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding 3<sup>rd</sup> molars); anterior crossbite of 3 or more maxillary teeth per arch; posterior crossbite of 3 or more maxillary teeth per arch; two or more congenitally missing teeth (excluding 3<sup>rd</sup> molars) of at least one tooth per quadrant; lateral open bite: 2 mm or more of 4 or more teeth per arch; and anterior open bite: 2 mm or more of 4 or more teeth per arch. (Exhibit 5, p. 9). If any of these are present, the request for orthodontic treatment is approved. (Exhibit 5, p. 9, testimony). If none of these are present, the orthodontist measures overjet, overbite, mandibular protrusion, open bite, ectopic eruption, anterior crowding in the upper and lower mouth, labio-lingual spread or anterior spacing, posterior unilateral crossbite, and posterior impactions or congenitally missing posterior teeth, and gives each measurement a value based on the calculation worksheet on the HLD Form. (Exhibit 5, p. 9, testimony).

The appellant's orthodontist indicated that the appellant has the autoqualifier of impinging overbite with evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue. (Exhibit 5, p. 9). The appellant's orthodontist calculated an HLD score of 14, measuring 2 millimeters for overjet, 4 millimeters for overbite, 5 points for crowding in the anterior teeth, and 3 points for labio-lingual spread. (Exhibit 5, p. 9).

Based on a review of the photographs of the appellant's mouth, MassHealth/DentaQuest calculated an HLD score of 10, measuring 2 millimeters for overjet, 6 millimeters for overbite, and 2 millimeters for labio-lingual spread (Exhibit 5, p. 15). MassHealth/DentaQuest did not find an impinging overbite in the photographs. (Exhibit 5, p. 15, testimony).

The MassHealth representative examined the appellant at the hearing and measured her teeth. The MassHealth representative calculated an HLD score of 15, measuring 2 millimeters for overjet, 6 millimeters for overbite, 5 points for crowding in the anterior teeth, and 2 millimeters for labio-lingual spread.

The MassHealth representative explained that to satisfy the autoqualifier of impinging overbite, there must be evidence that the lower teeth are making contact with the soft tissue of the upper mouth. The MassHealth representative had the appellant bite into occlusal paper to determine if the bottom teeth were biting into the roof of the appellant's mouth. The back of the appellant's upper front teeth showed the black mark from the occlusal paper, which indicated that the bottom teeth were biting into the back of the upper front teeth. (Testimony). The MassHealth representative pointed out that there were no black marks from the occlusal paper on the roof of the appellant's mouth, which shows that the bite is not impinging into the upper palate.

The MassHealth representative stated that while the appellant would benefit from orthodontic treatment, the issue here is not whether the appellant needs braces, but rather whether she meets the criteria under the regulations for MassHealth to cover the orthodontic treatment. The MassHealth representative stated that because there is no evidence of a handicapping malocclusion, MassHealth will not cover the orthodontic treatment. The MassHealth representative stated that the appellant can go back to her provider orthodontist 6 months after her last visit to be re-evaluated and have her HLD score re-calculated.

The appellant's representative stated that the appellant sees a speech therapist at school. The appellant's representative was advised to consult with the speech therapist to see if orthodontic treatment might be medically necessary to address the appellant's speech issues. A medical necessity narrative from the speech therapist could be submitted with the next prior authorization submission from the appellant's orthodontist.

## **Findings of Facts**

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

1. The appellant's orthodontist submitted a request for prior authorization for orthodontic treatment for the appellant.
2. The appellant's orthodontist completed an Orthodontics Prior Authorization Form and a HLD Form and submitted these, along with photographs and x-rays of the appellant's

mouth, to DentaQuest.

3. The appellant's orthodontist calculated an HLD score of 14; the orthodontist noted that the appellant has an impinging overbite.
4. The MassHealth representative calculated an HLD score of 15 after examining the appellant's teeth at the hearing.
5. A HLD score of 22 is the minimum score indicative of a handicapping malocclusion.
6. The appellant does not have an impinging overbite with evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue.

## **Analysis and Conclusions of Law**

### **Service Descriptions and Limitations: Orthodontic Services**

(A) General Conditions. The MassHealth agency pays for orthodontic treatment, subject to prior authorization, service descriptions and limitations as described in 130 CMR 420.431. The provider must seek prior authorization for orthodontic treatment and begin initial placement and insertion of orthodontic appliances and partial banding or full banding and brackets prior to the member's 21st birthday.

### **(B) Definitions.**

- (1) Pre-orthodontic Treatment Examination – includes the periodic observation of the member's dentition at intervals established by the orthodontist to determine when orthodontic treatment should begin.
- (2) Interceptive Orthodontic Treatment – includes treatment of the primary and transitional dentition to prevent or minimize the development of a handicapping malocclusion and therefore, minimize or preclude the need for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.
- (3) Comprehensive Orthodontic Treatment – includes a coordinated diagnosis and treatment leading to the improvement of a member's craniofacial dysfunction and/or dentofacial deformity which may include anatomical and/or functional relationship. Treatment may utilize fixed and/or removable orthodontic appliances and may also include functional and/or orthopedic appliances. Comprehensive orthodontics may incorporate treatment phases including adjunctive procedures to facilitate care focusing on specific objectives at various stages of dentofacial development.
- (4) Orthodontic Treatment Visits – periodic visits which may include but are not limited to updating wiring, tightening ligatures or otherwise evaluating and updating care while undergoing comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

(C) Service Limitations and Requirements.

(1) Pre-orthodontic Treatment Examination. The MassHealth agency pays for a pre-orthodontic treatment examination for members younger than 21 years old, once per six (6) months per member, and only for the purpose of determining whether orthodontic treatment is medically necessary, and can be initiated before the member's twenty-first birthday. The MassHealth agency pays for a pre-orthodontic treatment examination as a separate procedure (see 130 CMR 420.413). The MassHealth agency does not pay for a pre-orthodontic treatment examination as a separate procedure in conjunction with pre-authorized ongoing or planned orthodontic treatment.

(2) Interceptive Orthodontics.

(a) The MassHealth agency pays for interceptive orthodontic treatment once per member per lifetime. The MassHealth agency determines whether the treatment will prevent or minimize a handicapping malocclusion based on the clinical standards described in Appendix F of the Dental Manual.

(b) The MassHealth agency limits coverage of interceptive orthodontic treatment to primary and transitional dentition with at least one of the following conditions: constricted palate, deep impinging overbite, Class III malocclusion including skeletal Class III cases as defined in Appendix F of the Dental Manual when a protraction facemask/reverse pull headgear is necessary at a young age, craniofacial anomalies, anterior cross bite, or dentition exhibiting results of harmful habits or traumatic interferences between erupting teeth.

(c) When initiated during the early stages of a developing problem, interceptive orthodontics may reduce the severity of the malformation and mitigate its causes. Complicating factors such as skeletal disharmonies, overall space deficiency, or other conditions may require subsequent comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment may be sought for Class III malocclusions as defined in Appendix F of the Dental Manual requiring facemask treatment at the same time that authorization for interceptive orthodontic treatment is sought. For members with craniofacial anomalies, prior authorization may separately be sought for the cost of appliances, including installation.

(3) Comprehensive Orthodontics. The MassHealth agency pays for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, subject to prior authorization, 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. Upon the completion of orthodontic treatment, the provider must take post treatment photographic prints and maintain them in the member's dental record. The MassHealth agency pays for the office visit, radiographs and a record fee of the pre-orthodontic treatment examination (alternative billing to a contract fee) when the MassHealth agency denies a request for prior authorization for comprehensive orthodontic treatment or when the member terminates the planned

treatment. The payment for a pre-orthodontic treatment consultation as a separate procedure does not include models or photographic prints. The MassHealth agency may request additional consultation for any orthodontic procedure. Payment for comprehensive orthodontic treatment is inclusive of initial placement, and insertion of the orthodontic fixed and removable appliances (for example: rapid palatal expansion (RPE) or head gear), and records. Comprehensive orthodontic treatment may occur in phases, with the anticipation that full banding must occur during the treatment period. The payment for comprehensive orthodontic treatment covers a maximum period of three (3) calendar years. The MassHealth agency pays for orthodontic treatment as long as the member remains eligible for MassHealth, if initial placement and insertion of fixed or removable orthodontic appliances begins before the member reaches 21 years of age. Comprehensive orthodontic care should commence when the first premolars and 1st permanent molars have erupted. It should only include the transitional dentition in cases with craniofacial anomalies such as cleft lip or cleft palate. Comprehensive treatment may commence with second deciduous molars present. Subject to prior authorization, the MassHealth agency will pay for more than one comprehensive orthodontic treatment for members with cleft lip, cleft palate, cleft lip and palate, and other craniofacial anomalies to the extent treatment cannot be completed within three years.

(4) Orthodontic Treatment Visits. The MassHealth agency pays for orthodontic treatment visits on a quarterly (90-days) basis for ongoing orthodontic maintenance and treatment beginning after the initial placement, and insertion of the orthodontic fixed and removable appliances. If a member becomes inactive for any period of time, prior authorization is not required to resume orthodontic treatment visits and subsequent billing, unless the prior authorization time limit has expired. The provider must document the number and dates of orthodontic treatment visits in the member's orthodontic record.

(5) Orthodontic Case Completion. The MassHealth agency pays for orthodontic case completion for comprehensive orthodontic treatment which includes the removal of appliances, construction and placement of retainers and follow-up visits. The MassHealth agency pays for a maximum of five (5) visits for members whose orthodontic treatment begins before their 21st birthday, consistent with 130 CMR 420.431(A). The MassHealth agency pays for the replacement of lost or broken retainers with prior authorization.

(6) Orthodontic Transfer Cases. The MassHealth agency pays for members who transfer from one orthodontic provider to another for orthodontic services subject to prior authorization to determine the number of treatment visits remaining. Payment for transfer cases is limited to the number of treatment visits approved. Providers must submit requests using the form specified by MassHealth.

(7) Orthodontic Terminations. The MassHealth agency requires providers to make all efforts to complete the active phase of treatment before requesting payment for removal of brackets and bands of a noncompliant member. If the provider determines

that continued orthodontic treatment is not indicated because of lack of member's cooperation and has obtained the member's consent, the provider must submit a written treatment narrative on office letterhead with supporting documentation, including the case prior authorization number.

(8) Radiographs. Payment for Cephalometric and radiographs used in conjunction with orthodontic diagnosis is included in the payment for comprehensive orthodontic treatment (see 130 CMR 420.423(D)). The MassHealth agency pays for radiographs as a separate procedure for orthodontic diagnostic purposes only for members younger than 21 years old if requested by the MassHealth agency.

(9) Oral/Facial Photographic Images. The MassHealth agency pays for digital or photographic prints, not slides, only to support prior-authorization requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Payment for digital or photographic prints is included in the payment for comprehensive orthodontic treatment or orthognathic treatment. The MassHealth agency does not pay for digital or photographic prints as a separate procedure (see 130 CMR 420.413). Payment for orthodontic treatment includes payment for services provided as part of the pre-orthodontic treatment examination, unless the MassHealth agency denies the prior authorization request for interceptive or comprehensive orthodontic treatment. The MassHealth agency pays for the pre-orthodontic treatment examination if prior authorization is denied for interceptive or comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

(130 CMR 420.431).

MassHealth covers comprehensive orthodontic treatment if the MassHealth member evidences a handicapping malocclusion either by having one of the autoqualifiers listed on the HDL form or by meeting a HLD score of 22 or higher. Comprehensive orthodontic treatment is also covered by MassHealth if it is medically necessary for the member as evidenced by a medical necessity narrative and supporting documentation. The appellant's orthodontist noted that no medical necessity narrative would be submitted. Despite the appellant's orthodontist's indication that the appellant has the autoqualifier of an impinging overbite, the exam using occlusal paper at the hearing showed no evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue, and thus the appellant does not meet criteria for an impinging overbite. Both the appellant's orthodontist and the MassHealth representative calculated an HLD score less than 22. Because there is no evidence that the appellant has any of the autoqualifiers, nor does she have a HLD score of 22 or higher, there is no evidence to support that the appellant has a handicapping malocclusion. MassHealth was correct in denying the request for prior approval pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431. MassHealth's action is upheld and the 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.

---

Patricia Mullen  
Hearing Officer  
Board of Hearings

cc: MassHealth Representative: DentaQuest