

# Office of Medicaid BOARD OF HEARINGS

**Appellant Name and Address:**



<b>Appeal Decision:</b>	Denied	<b>Appeal Number:</b>	2500496
<b>Decision Date:</b>	4/2/2025	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	2/3/2025
<b>Hearing Officer:</b>	Cynthia Kopka		

**Appearance for Appellant:**



**Appearance for MassHealth:**

Dr. Katherine Moynihan, 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 services
<b>Decision Date:</b>	4/2/2025	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	2/3/2025
<b>MassHealth's Rep.:</b>	Dr. Moynihan	<b>Appellant's Rep.:</b>	Parent
<b>Hearing Location:</b>	Tewksbury	<b>Aid Pending:</b>	No

### Authority

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

### Jurisdiction

By notice dated December 26, 2024, MassHealth denied Appellant's prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment. Exhibit 1. Appellant filed this appeal in a timely manner on January 8, 2025. Exhibit 2. 130 CMR 610.015(B). Challenging the denial of a request for assistance is a valid basis for appeal. 130 CMR 610.032.

### Action Taken by MassHealth

MassHealth denied Appellant's prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

### Issue

The appeal issue is whether MassHealth was correct, pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431(C), in determining that Appellant is ineligible for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

### Summary of Evidence

Appellant, a minor under the age of [REDACTED] was represented at hearing by a parent. The MassHealth representative, a licensed orthodontist, appeared for MassHealth on behalf of DentaQuest.

DentaQuest is the third-party contractor that administers and manages the dental program available to MassHealth members. Below is a summary of each party's testimony and the information submitted for hearing.

Appellant's orthodontic provider ("the provider") submitted a request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment on behalf of Appellant. The provider completed an Orthodontics Prior Authorization Form and a MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations (HLD) Form and submitted these documents with supporting photographs and X-rays to DentaQuest. Exhibit 4.

MassHealth will only provide coverage for comprehensive orthodontic treatment for members who have a handicapping malocclusion as provided by regulation. A handicapping malocclusion 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 one of a group of exceptional or handicapping dental conditions.<sup>1</sup> If such a handicapping condition exists, as explained in both the MassHealth Dental Manual and the HLD Forms within Exhibit 4, this creates an alternative and independent basis for approval of the prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontics, regardless of the actual HLD score. Alternatively, a provider can submit a narrative and supporting documentation detailing how comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary.

The provider submitted documents indicating an HLD score of 30 for Appellant with no automatically qualifying condition. The provider declined to submit a medical necessity narrative with the request. Exhibit 4 at 11-12. The MassHealth representative testified that upon initial review of the documents, DentaQuest found an HLD score of 13 with no exceptional condition. *Id.* at 7. At hearing, the MassHealth representative testified that based on her examination, she found 19 points and no exceptional condition. The MassHealth representative noted that the provider scored 15 points for mandibular protrusion, which was not present in the mouth. The MassHealth representative demonstrated how mandibular protrusion would appear at hearing and testified

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<sup>1</sup> Per Exhibit 4, MassHealth will approve a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontics, regardless of whether the HLD score is 22 or more, if there is evidence of any one of the following exceptional or handicapping conditions: (1) cleft lip, cleft palate, or other cranio-facial anomaly; (2) impinging overbite with evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue; (3) impactions where eruption is impeded but extraction is not indicated (excluding third molars); (4) severe traumatic deviations – this refers to accidents affecting the face and jaw rather than congenital deformity. Do not include traumatic occlusions or crossbites; (5) overjet greater than 9 millimeters (mm.); (6) reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm.; (7) crowding of 10 mm. or more, in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding third molars). Includes the normal complement of teeth; (8) spacing of 10 mm. or more, in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding third molars). Includes the normal complement of teeth; (9) anterior crossbite of 3 or more maxillary teeth per arch; (10) posterior crossbite of 3 or more maxillary teeth per arch; (11) two or more congenitally missing teeth (excluding third molars) of at least one tooth per quadrant; (12) lateral open bite: 2 mm or more, of 4 or more teeth per arch; or (13) anterior open bite, 2 mm. or more, of 4 or more teeth per arch.

that Appellant's upper jaw is more forward than the lower jaw, resulting in an overbite, not an underbite.

Appellant's parent testified that when he received the denial, he did not realize it was based on a matrix. Appellant's parent argued that 19 is very close to 22 and MassHealth already made a mistake when it found 13 points. Appellant's parent wrote to MassHealth after receiving the denial and discussed the social impact of the denial, as Appellant is subject to ridicule based on his teeth. Appellant has difficulty chewing food with his bite. Appellant's family has limited financial means to afford braces privately. Appellant's parent understood MassHealth's explanation about the medical necessity narrative and submitting it with a new request.

## Findings of Fact

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

1. The 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 submitted documents indicating an HLD score of 30 for Appellant with no exceptional handicapping dental condition. The provider did not submit a medical necessity narrative. *Id.* at 11-12.
3. On December 26, 2024, MassHealth denied Appellant's prior authorization request and Appellant timely appealed the denial to the Board of Hearings. Exhibits 1 and 2.
4. The MassHealth representative found an HLD score of 19 with no exceptional handicapping dental condition.
5. Appellant does not have evidence of mandibular protrusion.

## Analysis and Conclusions of Law

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.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, 130 CMR 420.431(C)(3) states, in relevant part:

The MassHealth agency pays for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, subject to prior authorization, once per member per lifetime for a member younger than ■■■

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<sup>2</sup> The Dental Manual is available in MassHealth's Provider Library, on its website.

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*.

According to MassHealth's Dental Program Office Reference Manual (ORM) Section 3.7, MassHealth approves prior authorization requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment when

- 1) the member has one of the "auto qualifying" conditions described by MassHealth in the HLD Index;
- 2) the member meets or exceeds the threshold score designated by MassHealth on the HLD index; or
- 3) comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary for the member, as demonstrated by a medical necessity narrative and supporting documentation submitted by the requesting provider.

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. The HLD allows for the identification of certain autoqualifying conditions and provides a single score, based on a series of measurements, which represent the presence, absence, and degree of handicap. MassHealth will authorize treatment for cases with verified autoqualifiers or verified scores of 22 and above.

Appendix D of the Dental Manual also includes the instructions for submitting a medical necessity narrative. It states the following:

Providers may establish that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary by submitting a medical necessity narrative and supporting documentation, where applicable. The narrative must establish that comprehensive orthodontic treatment is medically necessary to treat a handicapping malocclusion, including to correct or significantly ameliorate

- i. a severe deviation affecting the patient's mouth and/or underlying dentofacial structures;
- ii. a diagnosed mental, emotional, or behavioral condition caused by the patient's malocclusion;
- iii. a diagnosed nutritional deficiency and/or substantiated inability to eat or chew caused by the patient's malocclusion;
- iv. a diagnosed speech or language pathology caused by the patient's

- malocclusion; or
- v. 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...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

- i. 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);
- ii. describe the nature and extent of the identified clinician(s) involvement and interaction with the patient, including dates of treatment;
- iii. state the specific diagnosis or other opinion of the patient's condition furnished by the identified clinician(s);
- iv. document the recommendation by the clinician(s) to seek orthodontic evaluation or treatment (if such a recommendation was made);
- v. discuss any treatments for the patient's condition (other than the comprehensive orthodontic treatment) considered or attempted by the clinician(s); and
- vi. provide any other relevant information from the clinician(s) that supports the requesting provider's justification of the medical necessity of comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Here, Appellant does not have a verified score of 22 points. MassHealth testified credibly that Appellant did not have evidence of a mandibular protrusion, as his bottom jaw does not protrude past his top jaw. Based on the testimony and the provided record, Appellant's provider awarded 15 points in error.

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.

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Cynthia Kopka  
Hearing Officer  
Board of Hearings

MassHealth Representative: DentaQuest 1, MA