

**Office of Medicaid
BOARD OF HEARINGS**

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2502364
Decision Date:	05/09/2025	Hearing Date:	04/17/2025
Hearing Officer:	Marc Tonaszuck	Record Open to:	05/01/2025

Appearance for Appellant:



Appearance for MassHealth:

Dr. John Fraone, BeneCare

Interpreter:



*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:	Dental Services – Orthodontic Services
Decision Date:	05/09/2025	Hearing Date:	04/17/2025
MassHealth's Rep.:	Dr. John Fraone, BeneCare	Appellant's Rep.:	██████
Hearing Location:	Springfield MassHealth Enrollment Center	Aid Pending:	No

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 01/27/2025, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (see 130 CMR 420.431 and Exhibit 4). A timely appeal was filed on the appellant's behalf¹ on 02/07/2025 (see 130 CMR 610.015(B) and Exhibit 2). Denial of a request for prior approval 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 correct, pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431(C), in

¹ The appellant is a minor child who was represented in these proceedings by her mother.

determining that the appellant is ineligible for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Summary of Evidence

The appellant is a minor MassHealth member who appeared at hearing in person with her mother as the appeal representative. MassHealth was represented at hearing by Dr. Fraone, also in person, a dental consultant from BeneCare, the MassHealth dental contractor.

The appellant's provider, [REDACTED], submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, including photographs and X-rays on 01/16/2025. 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. The provider indicated that the appellant has an HLD score of 24, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	4	1	4
Overbite in mm	2	1	2
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	1	5	5
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)	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			24

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

When MassHealth evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 18 points. The MassHealth HLD Form reflects the following scores:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	2	1	2

Overbite in mm	3	1	3
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	1	5	5
Open Bite in mm	0	4	0
Ectopic Eruption (# of teeth, excluding third molars)	0	3	0
Anterior Crowding	Maxilla: X Mandible: 0	Flat score of 5 for each	5
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			18

MassHealth did not find an automatic qualifying condition. Because it found an HLD score below the threshold of 22 and no autoqualifier, MassHealth denied the appellant's prior authorization request on 01/27/2025.

At hearing Dr. Fraone obtained permission from the appellant's mother to physically examine her bite. He testified that the appellant has an HLD score of 18 points, as follows:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm	2	1	2
Overbite in mm	3	1	3
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	1	5	5
Open Bite in mm	0	4	0
Ectopic Eruption (# of teeth, excluding third molars)	0	3	0
Anterior Crowding	Maxilla: X Mandible: 0	Flat score of 5 for each	5
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			18

The MassHealth dentist first testified that he could not score points for anterior mandibular (lower jaw) crowding. He testified that points are given in this field when the front six teeth on the lower jaw have at least 3.5 mm of crowding. He testified that the materials provided to MassHealth, and his physical examination of the appellant do not show at least 3.5 mm. Therefore, he could not give the appellant 5 points for mandibular anterior crowding.

Without the score for mandibular anterior crowding (5 points), the appellant's HLD score does not reach the required 22 points. Therefore, MassHealth could not approve the appellant's request for comprehensive orthodontics.

The appellant's mother testified with the assistance of a Spanish-language interpreter that "no two medical opinions are the same." She also testified that the appellant suffers from arthritis; her bones "are soft" and affect her teeth. She explained that the appellant has a "deformed face," that could get worse without braces. The mother concluded that she thought the process was "unfair," because her children "need braces."

The hearing officer asked the appellant's mother if she would like to submit a letter of medical necessity from a health care provider who will attest that the appellant has a medical condition that will be made better with braces. The appellant's mother asked for one week to provide the medical necessity documentation. The record remained open until 04/24/2025 for the appellant's submission and until 05/01/2025 for BeneCare's response (Exhibit 5). No submission was received from either party during the record open period.

Findings of Fact

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

1. On 01/16/2025, the appellant's orthodontic provider, [REDACTED], 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 24 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 MassHealth evaluated the prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 18, 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 or when the appellant's malocclusion meets the criteria of one of the autoqualifiers (Testimony).
6. On 01/27/2025, MassHealth notified the appellant that the prior authorization request was denied (Exhibits 1 and 4).
7. On 02/07/2025, the appellant filed a timely appeal of the denial (Exhibit 2).
8. On 04/17/2025, a fair hearing took place before the Board of Hearings (Exhibit 3). The appellant appeared in person with her mother as appeal representative. The MassHealth dentist also appeared in person.
9. At the fair hearing, a MassHealth dental consultant reviewed the provider's paperwork, photographs, and X-rays. In addition, after obtaining permission from the appellant's mother, he physically examined the appellant's mouth, teeth and the way her teeth come together. MassHealth found an HLD score of 18 (Testimony).
10. The appellant does not have at least 3.5 mm of crowding among the bottom front six teeth (Testimony).
11. The appellant has at least 3.5 mm of crowding among the top six front teeth (Testimony).
12. The appellant has an overjet measuring 2 mm (2 points), an overbite of 3 mm (3 points), and a labio-lingual spread of 3 mm (3 points).
13. The appellant's HLD score is below 22 (Testimony).
14. The appellant's mother requested an opportunity to provide a letter of medical necessity to support the appellant's request for comprehensive orthodontia. Her request was granted, and the record remained open until 04/24/2025 for her submission and until 05/01/2025 for MassHealth's response (Exhibit 5).
15. Neither party made a submission during the record open period.
16. The appellant does not have any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment (Testimony).

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, 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 (“automatic qualifying condition” or “autoqualifier”).

The appellant’s provider documented that the appellant has an HLD score of 24. This HLD Index score was calculated using the provider’s measurements of 4 mm of an overjet (4 points), 2 mm of an overbite (2 points), one mm of mandibular protrusion (5 points), anterior crowding on both arches (5 points for each arch = 10 points), and a labio-lingual spread of 3 mm (3 points).

Upon receipt of the PA request and after reviewing the provider’s submission, MassHealth found an HLD score of 18. Like the treating provider, MassHealth found no automatic qualifying condition. As a result, MassHealth denied the request for comprehensive orthodontics. The appellant appealed to the Board of Hearings and a fair hearing took place, at which MassHealth was represented by an orthodontist. Both parties appeared in person.

In his testimony at the fair hearing, the MassHealth dentist testified he reviewed the prior authorization documents. He also obtained permission from the appellant’s mother and examined the appellant’s mouth, teeth, and bite. As a result of his examination and review of the documents, the MassHealth orthodontist testified that he found an HLD score of 18 and no automatic qualifying condition. The main difference between the appellant’s provider’s score and that of Dr. Fraone’s score is the scoring of the anterior crowding.

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. Fraone testified that although the appellant has at least 3.5 mm of crowding in the anterior teeth of the maxillary (top) arch, there is not at least 3.5

mm of crowding in the six anterior teeth on the mandibular (lower) arch. Therefore, he could give only 5 points for anterior crowding, not 10, as documented by the treating orthodontist. He explained his scores to the appellant's mother and to the hearing officer, referencing the photographs of the appellant's teeth that were included with the PA request. The provider's HLD Index score of 24, when decreased by 5 points for the crowding on only one arc (instead of both), results in a total HLD Index score of 19², which does not meet the minimum necessary score of 22.

Dr. Fraone's score is supported by the photographs and other documents submitted with the PA request. Dr. Fraone, a licensed dentist, 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 mother requested an opportunity to submit a letter of medical necessity to the hearing record. Her request was granted, but she failed to provide any submission.

The appellant's mother testified credibly that the appellant might benefit from orthodonture; however, she was unable to show that the appellant met the requirements set out by MassHealth for approval for payment of the orthodonture. 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

² The MassHealth dentist's HLD Index score was 18, but even assuming that the provider's other measurements are correct, when it is reduced by 5 points for the crowding on only one arch, the total HLD Index score is less than 22 points.

Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

MassHealth Representative: BeneCare 1, Attn: Jessica Lusignan