

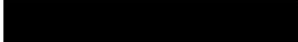
**Office of Medicaid
BOARD OF HEARINGS**

Appellant Name and Address:



Appeal Decision:	Denied	Appeal Number:	2506913
Decision Date:	08/01/2025	Hearing Date:	06/18/2025
Hearing Officer:	Kimberly Scanlon		

Appearance for Appellant:



Appearance for MassHealth:

Dr. Harold Kaplan, D.M.D.
Kara Gonzalez, Appeals Representative



*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:	08/01/2025	Hearing Date:	06/18/2025
MassHealth's Reps.:	Dr. Harold Kaplan; Kara Gonzalez	Appellant's Rep.:	██████████
Hearing Location:	Charlestown MassHealth Enrollment Center - Room 1 (Remote)	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 March 24, 2025, MassHealth denied the appellant's request for prior authorization of comprehensive orthodontic treatment. (130 CMR 420.431; Exhibit 5). The appellant filed this appeal in a timely manner on or about May 1, 2025. (130 CMR 610.015(B); Exhibit 1).¹ Denial of a request for prior authorization is valid grounds for appeal. (130 CMR 610.032).

Action Taken by MassHealth

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

¹ On May 5, 2025, the Board of Hearings (BOH) notified the appellant that her appeal was dismissed for failure to submit the MassHealth notice that was being appealed (Exhibit 4). On or about May 9, 2025, the BOH received the March 24th notice being appealed (Exhibits, 5-6). On May 23, 2025, the BOH scheduled a hearing to take place on June 18, 2025 (Exhibit 7).

Issue

The appeal issue is whether MassHealth was correct, pursuant to 130 CMR 420.431, in denying the appellant's prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

Summary of Evidence

The appellant is a minor MassHealth member who was represented telephonically at the hearing by her mother. MassHealth was represented at the hearing by Dr. Harold Kaplan, an orthodontic consultant from BeneCare, the MassHealth dental contractor.

The appellant's orthodontic provider submitted a prior authorization request for comprehensive orthodontic treatment, including photographs and X-rays, on or about March 11, 2025 (Exhibit 8, p. 8). As required, her orthodontic provider completed the MassHealth Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations ("HLD") Form. The HLD Form requires a total score of 22 or higher for approval, unless the appellant has one of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment. The appellant's orthodontic provider did not find any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment *Id.* The provider's HLD Form indicates that he found a total score of 24, broken down as follows:

Id. The appellant's

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm.	2	1	2
Overbite in mm.	2	1	2
Mandibular Protrusion in mm	4	5	20
Anterior 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 ²	0
Labio-Lingual Spread, in mm (anterior spacing)	0	1	0
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

² The HLD scoring instructions state that to give points for anterior crowding, arch length insufficiency must exceed 3.5 mm.

orthodontic provider did not indicate that a medical necessity narrative was submitted (Exhibit 8, p. 7).

When BeneCare evaluated this prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 19. The HLD Form reflects the following scores:

Conditions Observed	Raw Score	Multiplier	Weighted Score
Overjet in mm.	2	1	2
Overbite in mm.	0	1	0
Mandibular Protrusion in mm.	3	5	15
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			19

Because it found an HLD score below the threshold of 22 and no autoqualifying conditions, MassHealth denied the appellant’s prior authorization request on or about March 24, 2025 (Exhibit 5).

At the hearing, Dr. Kaplan completed an HLD form based on a review of the X-rays and photographs submitted. He agreed with MassHealth’s scoring of 19 points and he did not see any evidence of autoqualifying conditions. Dr. Kaplan explained that the main difference between his scoring and the scoring performed by the appellant’s orthodontic provider surrounds the mandibular protrusion category. He explained that mandibular protrusion exists when a bottom molar comes into contact in front of the corresponding top molar. In reviewing the documentation that was submitted on behalf of the appellant, MassHealth and Dr. Kaplan noted evidence of a mandibular protrusion in 2 of the appellant’s molars on the left side of her mouth and 1 on the right side of her mouth and therefore scored 15 points in that category. The appellant’s orthodontic provider scored a total of 20 points in that category; he did not note the specific opposing teeth in which he found mandibular protrusion. Dr. Kaplan testified that the documentation that was submitted on behalf of the appellant indicated that the appellant’s orthodontic provider argued that a mandibular protrusion also existed in the appellant’s right sixth molar (See, Exhibit 8, p. 6). However, the

documentation that was submitted on behalf of the appellant also indicates that some of the appellant's adult teeth (including the corresponding molar in question) have not fully grown in yet and therefore he could not score an additional 5 points in this category.

The appellant's mother asked Dr. Kaplan if he received the records that were recently submitted by the orthodontist; Dr. Kaplan confirmed receipt (See, Exhibit 8). Additionally, she asked why the appellant was approved for Phase 1 treatment and denied for Phase 2 treatment. She stated that the appellant's adult teeth have grown in and have gotten worse. In response, Dr. Kaplan explained that the appellant would likely benefit from orthodontic treatment; however, based on the HLD Form, she does not currently meet the criteria necessary for approval. He stated that the records that were submitted on behalf of the appellant show some, but not all, of her adult teeth have fully grown in. He explained that once all her adult teeth have grown in, her HLD score may change. The appellant may also be re-examined every six months by her orthodontic provider and has until the age of 21 to be treated. Because the appellant's HLD score is below 22 and there were no auto qualifiers present, the appellant does not have a handicapping malocclusion, and MassHealth will not pay for comprehensive orthodontic treatment at this time.

The appellant's mother argued that MassHealth scored 19 points based on its review of documentation that was submitted, whereas the appellant's orthodontist scored 24 points based on an examination of the appellant's mouth. Dr. Kaplan suggested that if the appellant were to appeal subsequent dental denial notices, she can opt for an in-person hearing so that BeneCare can conduct an examination of her mouth.

Findings of Fact

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

1. On or about March 11, 2025, the appellant's orthodontic provider submitted a prior authorization request to MassHealth for comprehensive orthodontic treatment on behalf of the appellant.
2. The appellant's provider completed a Handicapping Labio-Lingual Deviations Form for the appellant and calculated an overall score of 24.
3. The appellant's provider did not find any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment, nor did he submit a medical necessity narrative on behalf of the appellant.
4. BeneCare evaluated the appellant's prior authorization request on behalf of MassHealth, and its orthodontists determined that the appellant had an HLD score of 19, also finding no conditions warranting automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment.

5. MassHealth approves requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment when the member has an HLD score of 22 or more or has one of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment.
6. On or about March 24, 2025, MassHealth notified the appellant that the prior authorization request that was submitted on her behalf was denied.
7. On or about May 1, 2025, the appellant filed a timely appeal of the MassHealth action.
8. At the hearing, a MassHealth orthodontic consultant reviewed the provider's paperwork, photographs, and x-rays and calculated an HLD score of 19. He did not find evidence of any autoqualifying conditions that presently exist in the appellant's mouth.
9. There is no current evidence in the appellant's submission that mandibular protrusion exists in the appellant's right sixth molar.

Analysis and Conclusions of Law

Per 130 CMR 420.431(C)(3), 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.

(130 CMR 420.431(C)).

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 handicapping malocclusion. MassHealth will also approve a prior authorization request, without regard for the HLD numerical score, if there is evidence of one of the following automatic qualifying conditions: cleft palate; impinging overbite with evidence of occlusal contact into the opposing soft tissue; impaction where eruption is impeded but extraction is not indicated (excluding third molars); severe traumatic deviation; overjet greater than 9 mm.; reverse overjet greater than 3.5 mm.; crowding of 10 mm. or more in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding 3rd molars); spacing of 10 mm. or more in either the maxillary or mandibular arch (excluding 3rd 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 third molars) of at least one tooth per quadrant; lateral

open bite 2mm or more of 4 or more teeth per arch; or anterior open bite 2 mm. or more of 4 or more teeth per arch.

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, nutritional deficiency, a speech or language pathology, or the presence of any other 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 dietician, 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.

(Appendix D).

In the present case, the appellant's orthodontic provider found an overall HLD score of 24. After reviewing the provider's submission, MassHealth found an HLD score of 19. Upon review of the prior authorization documents, Dr. Kaplan found an HLD score of 19. All the orthodontists agreed that the appellant did not have any autoqualifying conditions present in her mouth. The difference in scoring surrounds the mandibular protrusion category.

As Dr. Kaplan explained, there must be evidence that a bottom molar comes into contact in front of the corresponding top molar for a mandibular protrusion to exist. Here, according to the x-rays and photographs submitted by the appellant's orthodontic provider, there is no evidence that the appellant's right 6th molar comes into contact in front of the corresponding molar because the corresponding molar has not fully grown in yet. I have reviewed the paperwork, x-rays, and photographs that were submitted by the appellant's provider and find that Dr. Kaplan's measurements and testimony are credible and his determination of the overall HLD score and the lack of autoqualifiers is consistent with the evidence.

Because the appellant's HLD score falls below the necessary 22 points and she does not have any of the conditions that warrant automatic approval of comprehensive orthodontic treatment, the appeal is denied.³

Order for MassHealth

None.

³ This denial does not preclude the appellant's orthodontic provider from re-submitting prior authorization requests for comprehensive orthodontic treatment on behalf of the appellant every 6 months upon reexamination until she reaches the age of 21.

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.

Kimberly Scanlon
Hearing Officer
Board of Hearings

MassHealth Representative: BeneCare 2, Attn: Jessica Lusignan