

BETTER CARE, LOWER COST

Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage

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Public Statement on Medicare Coverage of Medically Necessary Oral and Dental Health Therapies

Beginning in 2016, a consortium was formed among the undersigned organizations to support and advocate for Medicare coverage of medically necessary oral and dental care. Today, this broad national community of dental and medical specialists, patient and consumer advocates, and care delivery providers applauds the Biden Administration and Congressional champions for taking action that will have a direct and meaningful impact in the lives of tens of millions of Medicare beneficiaries.

It is well established that chronic diseases disproportionately impact Medicare beneficiaries and impose a substantial cost on the federal government. It is also well established that untreated oral microbial infections are closely linked to a wide range of costly chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and stroke. In addition, oral diseases have been documented by researchers and medical specialty societies as precluding, delaying, and even jeopardizing medical treatments such as organ and stem cell transplantation, heart valve repair or replacement, cancer chemotherapies, placement of orthopedic prostheses, and management of autoimmune diseases.

Despite these factors, most Medicare beneficiaries have been unable to receive oral/dental care even when medically necessary for the treatment of Medicare-covered diseases. Historically, Medicare coverage has extended to the treatment of all microbial infections except for those relating to the teeth and periodontium. Believing there is no medical justification for this exclusion, the Consortium formed to express broad consensus among health care providers that such care is integral to the medical management of numerous diseases and medical conditions and that the lack of medically necessary oral/dental care heightens the risk of costly medical complications, increasing the financial burden on Medicare, beneficiaries, and taxpayers.

In recognition of these facts, the Biden Administration proposed transformative action yesterday to extend Medicare coverage to dental services that are integral to the delivery of covered medical services. Specifically, the Physician Fee Schedule for Fiscal Year 2023 proposes to meaningfully broaden reimbursement for medically necessary dental services. The proposed rule also opens an exciting opportunity for stakeholders to provide “comments on other types of clinical scenarios where dental services may be inextricably linked to, and substantially related and integral to, the clinical success of clinically related services, or furnished in connection with other covered medical services, and the potential establishment of a process to review public submissions of recommendations for identifying the circumstances when the policies may apply” as well as to “comment on potential future payment models for dental and oral health care services, and other impacted policies.”

“This important announcement marks a new day in the health of Medicare beneficiaries,” said Dr. Michael Alfano, D.M.D., Ph.D., cofounder of the Santa Fe Group and the Consortium. “Thanks to the tireless work of literally hundreds of organizations and thousands of dedicated advocates, Americans will no longer lack access to medically necessary oral and dental treatment within the traditional Medicare program.”

Dr. Cheryl Lee, President of the National Dental Association said, “We support this policy change as it represents significant progress towards a more equitable healthcare delivery system. Most importantly, it will expand access and improve outcomes while also reducing hospitalizations and Medicare program costs.”

Due to their conviction that the Medicare program and its beneficiaries should not be without the vital clinical and fiscal benefits of medically necessary oral/dental health therapies, more than 230 leading organizations joined as signatories of the Consortium’s Community Statement to urge Congress and the Administration to explore options for extending such evidence-based coverage for all Medicare beneficiaries.

“For too long Medicare beneficiaries have suffered due to a lack of coverage for medically necessary dental care crucial to treating other conditions,” said Center for Medicare Advocacy Executive Director Judith Stein. “Now, thanks to the determined efforts of this broad group of organizations, and the recognition of the administration, we look forward to a future of better health and quality of life, and greater program equity.”

In light of yesterday’s historic announcement, the Consortium will now turn to the important process of securing implementation of medically necessary coverage. Formal comments will be submitted, and community leaders will lend their expertise as the Administration works to formalize this policy in the manner best suited to meet the needs of Medicare beneficiaries.

The signatories of the Community Statement are listed below:

AARP	American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons
ABLE NH (Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH)	American Association of Kidney Patients
ACA Consumer Advocacy	American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
Acuity Specialists	American Association of Nurse Practitioners
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation	American Association of Public Health Dentistry
AIDS Foundation of Chicago	American Association on Health and Disability
Alliance for Retired Americans	American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
Allies for Independence	American College of Cardiology
ALS Association	American College of Emergency Physicians
American Academy of Nursing	American College of Gastroenterology
American Academy of Periodontology	American College of Physicians
American Association for Community Dental Programs	American College of Rheumatology
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research	American Dental Assistants Association
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists	American Dental Education Association
American Association of Colleges of Nursing	American Dental Hygienists’ Association
American Association of Diabetes Educators	American Diabetes Association
	American Geriatrics Society

American Head and Neck Society
 American Heart Association
 American Institute of Dental Public Health
 American Kidney Fund
 American Liver Foundation
 American Medical Association
 American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
 American Nephrology Nurses' Association
 American Network of Oral Health Coalitions
 American Nurses Association
 American Parkinson Disease Association
 American Psychiatric Association
 American Psychiatric Nurses Association
 American Public Health Association
 American Society for Radiation Oncology
 American Society of Clinical Oncology
 American Society of Nephrology
 American Society of Transplant Surgeons
 American Society of Transplantation
 American Thoracic Society
 Arcora Foundation
 Arizona Oral Health Coalition
 Arthritis Foundation
 Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
 Association of Community Cancer Centers
 Association of Oncology Social Work
 Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
 Autistic Self Advocacy Network
 Be a Hero
 Brain Injury Association of America
 California Dental Association
 California Medical Association
 CareQuest Institute for Oral Health
 Carlson Foley Enterprises
 Catholic Health Association of the United States
 Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE)
 Center for Elder Law & Justice
 Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation
 Center for Medicare Advocacy
 Center for Popular Democracy
 Champaign County Health Care Consumers
 Children's Dental Health Project
 Coalition for Oral Health for the Aging
 Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
 Colgate Palmolive Company
 Colorado Consumer Health Initiative
 Community Catalyst
 Community Dental Health NPO
 Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
 Cornerstone Dental Specialties
 Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
 Culpeper Wellness Foundation
 Davis Phinney Foundation for Parkinson's
 Delaware Dental Hygienists' Association
 Dental Lifeline Network
 Dental Trade Alliance
 Dentsply Sirona
 Dialysis Patient Citizens
 Dientes Community Dental Care
 Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
 Eating Disorders Coalition
 Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation
 Epilepsy Foundation
 EXCELth, Inc.
 Families USA
 504HealthNet
 Florida Health Justice Project
 Georgia AIDS Coalition
 Georgians for a Healthy Future
 Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
 GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare
 GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
 Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing
 Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition
 Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!
 Head and Neck Cancer Alliance
 Health Care For All (MA)
 Health Care Is a Human Right WA
 Health Care Voices
 Healthy Living and Learning Center
 Heartland Alliance
 Henry Schein Cares Foundation
 HIV Medicine Association
 Hispanic Dental Association
 International Pemphigus and Pemphigoid Foundation
 Island Liaison, Inc.
 John A. Hartford Foundation
 Jon C Burr Foundation
 Justice in Aging
 Kentucky Oral Health Coalition
 Klamath Basin Oral Health Coalition
 Lakeshore Foundation
 Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
 Louisiana Primary Care Association
 Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
 Lupus Foundation of America
 Maryland Dental Action Coalition
 Massachusetts ME/CFS and FM Assoc
 Medicaid|Medicare|CHIP Services Dental Association
 Medicare Rights Center
 Mended Hearts
 Mental Health America
 Metro New York Health Care for All
 Michigan Primary Care Association

Minnesota Dental Therapy Association
 myNEXUS
 National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
 National Alliance on Mental Illness
 National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
 National Association of Community Health Centers
 National Association of Dental Plans
 National Association of Nutrition and Aging
 Services Programs
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Association of States United for Aging
 and Disabilities
 National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity
 National Comprehensive Cancer Network
 National Committee to Preserve Social Security
 and Medicare
 National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
 National Consumers League
 National Council for Behavioral Health
 National Dental Association
 National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
 National Hispanic Medical Association
 National Health Law Program
 National Interprofessional Initiative on Oral Health
 National Kidney Foundation
 National League for Nursing
 National Medical Association
 National Multiple Sclerosis Society
 National Network for Oral Health Access
 National Osteoporosis Foundation
 National Rural Health Association
 National Stroke Association
 North American Transplant Coordinators Organization
 Northwest Harvest
 Nurses for America
 Nursing Interventions for Health System Elders
 NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing
 Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund
 Oklahoma Policy Institute
 Oncology Nursing Society
 Oral Cancer Foundation
 Oral Health Kansas
 Oral Health Nursing Education and Practice Program
 Oral Health Ohio
 Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
 Our Mother's Voice
 PA Coalition for Oral Health
 Pacific Dental Services Foundation
 Parkinson's Foundation
 Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative
 Pennsylvania Health Access Network
 PEW Dental Campaign
 Piedmont Regional Dental Clinic
 PRC
 Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
 Pride At Work - WA North, Mt. Kulshan Chapter
 Procter & Gamble
 ProHEALTH Dental
 Project Accessible Oral Health
 Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
 Renal Healthcare Association
 Renal Physicians Association
 Research!America
 Santa Fe Group
 School-Based Health Alliance
 Scleroderma Foundation
 Senior Charity Care Foundation
 Senior Mobile Dental
 Sepsis Alliance
 Sjögren's Foundation
 Smiles To Go, LLC
 Social Security Works
 Society for Transplant Social Workers
 Statewide Poverty Action Network
 Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer
 Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc
 Texas Parent to Parent
 The AIDS Institute
 The Arc of the United States
 The Bingham Program
 The CornerStone Community Development Center
 The Gerontological Society of America
 The Michael J. Fox Foundation
 The National Forum of ESRD Networks
 The Society for Thoracic Surgeons
 The TMJ Association
 Third Way
 Tri-Area Community Health
 Trust for America's Health
 United Health Organization
 United Network for Organ Sharing
 UUFHCT
 Virginia Community Healthcare Association
 Virginia Health Catalyst
 Virginia Organizing
 Virginia Rural Health Association
 Washington Healthcare Access Alliance
 Wayne County Oral Health Organization
 Wesley Living Woodland Homes
 West Central Initiative
 Western Center on Law and Poverty
 Winters Elder Day Council
 WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with
 Heart Disease