



*For Immediate Release
November 7, 2023*

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

The Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage commends the Biden Administration for once again taking significant regulatory action to improve the lives of millions of Medicare beneficiaries. While overall health is inextricably linked to oral health, dental care has long been inaccessible to millions of Medicare beneficiaries, leading to an alarming situation in which two-thirds of older Americans have periodontal disease and one-fifth have lost all of their teeth. Untreated oral conditions also significantly increase Medicare beneficiaries' risk of suffering chronic conditions, resulting in impaired well-being, increased hospitalizations, and higher program costs. As a result, the Consortium welcomes the final Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2024 as another important step forward for Medicare beneficiaries and oral systemic health.

Last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) took the first step when it clarified in the Physician Fee Schedule for 2023 that Medicare payment is available for dental services that are inextricably linked to and substantially related and integral to the clinical success of Medicare-covered medical services. On that basis, CMS specifically recognized payment in the context of organ transplant surgery, cardiac valve replacement, valvuloplasty procedures, and head and neck cancers.

The 2023 Physician Fee Schedule also established an annual process for stakeholders to nominate additional clinical scenarios for Medicare payment. Implemented this year, the new nominations process marks the first time stakeholders have been able to propose for CMS' formal consideration covered medical services for which clinical evidence demonstrates that dental care is inextricably linked and substantially related and integral to their clinical success. The Consortium and many of its members were proud to submit nominations spanning a broad range of medical conditions and covered services. We are deeply grateful for CMS' acceptance of proposed payment clarifications.

Specifically, Consortium members rallied to nominate and support clarification of Medicare payment for dental and oral care performed as part of a comprehensive workup for Medicare beneficiaries with cancer prior to the administration of chemotherapy, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, high-dose bone-modifying agents (antiresorptive therapy), and treatment of head and neck cancer. We also proposed diagnostic and treatment services (which may include imaging, anesthesia, operating room use, and other ancillary services) for consideration to eliminate oral or dental infection prior to or concurrent with the administration of these vital cancer care services.

We applaud CMS for carefully reviewing these nominations and including in the Physician Fee Schedule final rule Medicare payment clarification for them. With nearly two-thirds of each year's cancer diagnoses suffered by Americans aged 65 and older, this action will have a direct and meaningful impact in the lives of millions of beneficiaries and their families.

“By further clarifying Medicare payment of medically necessary dental care for beneficiaries with cancer, CMS is opening the door to improved outcomes and lower costs,” said Dr. Judith Haber on behalf of the Sante Fe Group. “Cancer strikes nearly one million older Americans annually, and CMS’ final rule will help ensure they have access to the medically necessary oral care they need.”

“We applaud this enhanced clarification of Medicare payment policy and the progress it makes towards more equitable health care for people who rely on Medicare for their health insurance,” said Melissa Burroughs, Director for Strategic Partnerships at Families USA. “In this final rule, CMS has clearly demonstrated it heard stakeholders’ request for more clarity on how to effectively seek additional payment clarification, and what it has finalized will be of tremendous help to many.”

“For decades, Medicare beneficiaries suffered due to a lack of access to medically necessary dental care,” said Center for Medicare Advocacy Executive Director Judith Stein. “Thanks to the evidence-based action the Medicare program continues to take, we are moving closer and closer to a future of better health, improved quality of life, and greater program equity.”

In support of transformative change, more than 240 leading organizations joined as signatories of the Consortium’s Community Statement to urge Congress and the Administration to explore options for extending evidence-based coverage to all Medicare beneficiaries. The Consortium will now turn to the forthcoming February 10, 2024 deadline for nominations of additional clinical criteria, and we look forward to continued consideration of Medicare payment clarification for medically necessary oral and dental services that inextricably linked, essential, and of profound clinical, fiscal, and human value.

The signatories of the Consortium’s Community Statement are listed below:

AARP	American Association of Public Health Dentistry
ABLE NH (Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH)	American Association on Health and Disability
ACA Consumer Advocacy	American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
Acuity Specialists	American College of Cardiology
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation	American College of Emergency Physicians
AIDS Foundation of Chicago	American College of Gastroenterology
Alliance for Retired Americans	American College of Physicians
Allies for Independence	American College of Rheumatology
ALS Association	American Dental Assistants Association
American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry	American Dental Education Association
American Academy of Nursing	American Dental Hygienists’ Association
American Academy of Oral Medicine	American Diabetes Association
American Academy of Oral Systemic Health	American Geriatrics Society
American Academy of Periodontology	American Head and Neck Society
American Association for Community Dental Programs	American Heart Association
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research	American Institute of Dental Public Health
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists	American Kidney Fund
American Association of Colleges of Nursing	American Liver Foundation
American Association of Diabetes Educators	American Medical Association
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons	American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
American Association of Kidney Patients	American Nephrology Nurses’ Association
American Association of Nurse Practitioners	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
 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
 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
 GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
 Haleon
 Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing
 Hawaii Oral Health Coalition
 Hawaii 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 Hispanic Nurses
 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 Council on Aging
 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
Special Care Dentistry Association
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