

BETTER CARE, LOWER COST

Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage

*For Immediate Release
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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 dental and medical specialists, patient and consumer advocates, and care delivery providers to support and advocate for Medicare coverage of medically necessary oral and dental care. Today, the Consortium 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 has proposed transformative action 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 issued yesterday by HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra and CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure 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, other covered medical services” as well as on a process for public submission of recommendations for identifying the circumstances when the policy may apply and the payment models that will support it.

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

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