

# **BETTER CARE, LOWER COST**

## *Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage*

*For Immediate Release  
July 8, 2022*

### **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  
 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