



# Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program

## Expanding to Children with Disabilities

Substitute Senate Bill 6549; Section 1(5); Chapter 156, Laws of 2018  
December 15, 2018

Washington State  
Health Care Authority

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# Summary

Substitute Senate Bill 6549 requires the Health Care Authority (HCA) to expand the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) program to serve children with disabilities until their thirteenth birthday. The HCA anticipates the program expansion will help reduce oral health disparities among children with disabilities. The statute also states:

On or before December 15, 2018, and on or before December 15, 2019, the authority, in consultation with any organizations administering the program, shall provide a report, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, to the health care and fiscal committees of the legislature, to include: (a) The number of dentists and dental hygienists participating in the program; and (b) The number of children with disabilities who received treatment through the program.

Barriers to implementing the ABCD program expansion as the Legislature and the HCA intended prevent HCA from reporting ABCD program expansion data in 2018 or 2019.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently communicated to HCA that we do not have approval to expand the program only to children enrolled in the Developmental Disabilities Administration's (DDA) home- and community-based waiver services.<sup>1</sup> To receive approval to use federal funding from CMS for the ABCD program expansion, HCA would need to include all children with disabilities. HCA is actively working to determine the fiscal impact of this requirement. We will update the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Legislature with information about that fiscal impact as soon as possible to obtain further direction regarding the ABCD program expansion.

If and when the program expansion occurs, Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) claims data from the ABCD program expansion will include data about provider participation and children receiving treatment. Apple Health providers have up to 365 days to submit their claims to the HCA or dental managed care organizations (MCOs), and dental MCOs have 30 days after they pay providers to submit their data to us. When we launch the program expansion, we will report the first year ABCD program expansion data to the Legislature.

## Background

The ABCD program is defined in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 182-535-1245. The Legislature established the program to increase access to dental services for Apple Health-eligible clients ages 5 and younger. Health care providers and community service programs identify and refer eligible clients to ABCD-certified providers, including dentists and primary care providers. The HCA pays enhanced fees to ABCD-certified providers for furnishing ABCD program services.

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<sup>1</sup> See WAC 182-515-1510. Available from: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=182-515-1510>  
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We contract with the University of Washington (UW) School of Dentistry and the Arcora Foundation<sup>2</sup> to train and certify service providers to participate in the ABCD program. We also contract with local agencies throughout the state to:

- Enroll clients and provide an ABCD program orientation;
- Connect clients to ABCD-certified providers; and
- Address obstacles to care, such as lack of transportation and limited English proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

The current ABCD program does not adequately address obstacles to meeting the oral health needs of children with disabilities.

- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry finds that children with special health care needs “may be at an increased risk for oral diseases throughout their lifetime.”<sup>4</sup>
- The UW School of Dentistry finds that “17% of children in Washington State have a special need ... Many individuals with special needs do not have access to regular and ongoing dental care.”<sup>5</sup>

## Program Expansion

SSB 6549 requires the HCA to expand the ABCD program to serve children with disabilities until their thirteenth birthday. Children enrolled in the expanded ABCD program will receive the same services available to other children enrolled in the existing ABCD program. We anticipate that the program expansion will help to reduce oral health disparities among children with disabilities.

We will encourage service provider participation in the expanded ABCD program by paying enhanced fees to dentists, dental hygienists,<sup>6</sup> and primary care providers certified to provide program services to children with disabilities. Service providers must complete a course on treating children with disabilities to become certified. The UW School of Dentistry and the Arcora Foundation will provide the expanded ABCD program training and certification. The HCA will contract with local agencies to encourage:

- Providers to become certified in the expanded ABCD program; and
- Families with eligible children to use expanded ABCD program services.

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<sup>2</sup> The Arcora Foundation was formerly known as the Washington Dental Service Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Summarized from the HCA’s ABCD Billing Guide. Available from: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/billers-and-providers/abcd-dental-bi-20180101.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Guideline on Management of Dental Patients with Special Health Care Needs. 2016. Available from: [http://www.aapd.org/media/policies\\_guidelines/g\\_shcn.pdf](http://www.aapd.org/media/policies_guidelines/g_shcn.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> University of Washington School of Dentistry. Patients with Special Needs. Available from: <https://dental.washington.edu/dept-oral-med/special-needs/patients-with-special-needs/>.

<sup>6</sup> The program expansion explicitly includes dental hygienists as a provider type.

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## Barriers to Implementation

HCA must obtain approval from CMS to receive federal funding for any new or expanded Apple Health benefit. SSB 6549 defined the ABCD program expansion population using language that defines children enrolled in the DDA home- and community-based waiver services. HCA's original fiscal analysis concluded that the program expansion would serve an additional 4,000 children from ages 6 to 13. The SSB 6549 fiscal note — and related HCA budget authority — included only the state and federal funds necessary to expand the ABCD program to serve that number of children.

However, HCA learned in June 2018 that CMS would not approve our use of federal funding to pay enhanced fees to providers who render ABCD program services only to children enrolled in the DDA home- and community-based waiver services. To receive approval from CMS to use federal funding for the ABCD program expansion, CMS explained that HCA would need to include all Apple Health children with disabilities from ages 6 to 13. This change would increase the eligible population of ABCD program expansion to more than 67,400 children — nearly 17 times the number of children we originally planned to serve.

We are actively working to determine the fiscal impact of the CMS decision. HCA will update OFM and the Legislature with fiscal impact as soon as possible to obtain further direction regarding the ABCD program expansion.

## Data Availability

If and when the program expansion occurs, Apple Health claims data from the ABCD program expansion will include data about provider participation and children receiving treatment. Per WAC 182-502-0150, Apple Health providers have up to 365 days to submit their claims to the HCA. In addition, the dental MCOs will have up to 30 days after they pay providers to submit their data to us. Due to these timelines, we will not have mature claims data to report in 2018 or 2019.

## Conclusion

Barriers to implementation prevent us from launching the ABCD program expansion and reporting data about both provider participation and children receiving treatment as the Legislature and HCA intended. To obtain further direction about implementing ABCD program expansion, HCA will update OFM and the Legislature with information about the fiscal impact of the CMS decision as soon as possible.

