



Medicaid Managed Dental Care

Annual Report

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6032, Section 213(1)(c); Chapter 299, Laws of 2018

January 31, 2019

Washington State
Health Care Authority

Becky Carrell
Medicaid Program Operations and Integrity
P.O. Box 45530
Olympia, WA 98501
Phone: (360)-725-1226
Fax: (360)-725-1152
www.hca.wa.gov



Legislative Reference

The Legislature, through Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6032 (2018), required the Health Care Authority (HCA) to submit an annual report describing the Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) Managed Care (MC) Dental Program's contracted entities' performance. The legislation requested that HCA provide specific information about the Managed Care Entities' (MCEs) utilization, provider networks, dental-related emergency room utilization cost reductions, and the integration of dental care with patients' primary care providers.

Project Timeline

In fall 2017, HCA began a competitive procurement process to contract with licensed dental health plans or managed health care plans on a prepaid or fixed-sum risk basis (as directed in ESSB 6032). The Medicaid MC dental request for proposal (RFP), No. 2516¹, was released on May 3, 2018.

On August 1, 2018 HCA announced three apparent successful bidders to provide carved-out MC dental services on a statewide basis, in anticipation of the January 1, 2019 implementation date. Initial reviews of the bids raised concerns about possible rate impacts. Due to these concerns, the Office of Financial Management, in August 2018, directed HCA to suspend the procurement process. It is anticipated the new start date will be July 1, 2019.

Pre-Contract Expectations

As HCA prepares for the July 1, 2019 MC dental program implementation, the agency is drafting contracts that address key areas of the MCEs' performance, as outlined in the RFP:

- Facilitate access to reduce emergency room visits for dental purposes;
- Improve oral health outcomes for Medicaid clients;
- Retain innovative programs such as the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) and Oral Health Initiatives Project that improve access and care, and develop new programs that improve access to care and dental outcomes;
- Increase the dental provider network, particularly for adults; and
- Provide timely access to dental services and coordination of dental and physical health services, as clinically indicated through care management.

These goals and objectives will be incorporated into the contract final draft that HCA expects to have signed no later than June 19, 2019.

¹ Available at https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/RFP%202516_MC%20Dental.pdf
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Increased Access to Dental Care

The main objective of the MC dental program is to increase Apple Health clients' provider access to dental providers. To meet this goal, adequate provider networks must be created to increase access and utilization.

The RFP sets milestones for the MCE's provider networks by service area. These milestones must be met for the MCE to provide services in that service area. HCA evaluates MCE network adequacy by looking at the number and location of both Apple Health clients and network providers (to ensure clients can reasonably access providers). Prior to implementation, the MCEs must have the capacity to service 25 percent of the adults and 60 percent of the children within each service area.

The HCA set milestones at 6 and 12 months post-implementation with yearly measurements after the first year of the program. Assuming a July 1, 2019 implementation date, the MCEs should have the capacity to provide services to 45 percent of adults and 65 percent of children in each service area by July 1, 2020.

Increased networks should improve dental program utilization. In fiscal year 2016, 2.1 million Medicaid clients were eligible for dental benefits, but only 800,000 accessed dental care, for an overall utilization rate of 38.2 percent. HCA expects the MCEs to improve utilization using care management services, such as initial dental health screenings, dental provider or home assignments, and outreach efforts. These expectations were clearly outlined in the RFP, are included in HCA's standard Apple Health Managed Care contracts, and will be in the MC dental program final draft.

Increased utilization and adequate networks are key to reducing dental-related emergency room visits. The HCA projects that a year after MC dental program implementation, emergency room visit costs will decrease. Find additional information about this goal in the October 30, 2018 legislative report *Managed Care Dental: Potential Dental Emergency Department Savings*.²

² Available at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/essb-6032-managed-care-dental-10-30-18.pdf>
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