




Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program

Expanding to Children with Disabilities: Final Report

Substitute Senate Bill 6549; Chapter 156; Laws of 2018; Section 1(5)
December 15, 2019

Washington State
Health Care Authority

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ABCD program expansion

Washington State defines the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) program in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 182-535-1245. Health care providers and community service programs identify and refer eligible clients to ABCD-certified providers, including dentists and primary care providers. The Health Care Authority (HCA) contracts with the University of Washington's School of Dentistry (UW) and the Arcora Foundation¹ to develop the training curriculum, provide training, and certify service providers to participate in the ABCD program. HCA pays enhanced fees to ABCD-certified providers for delivering the program's services.

The Legislature originally established the ABCD program to increase access to dental services for Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) eligible clients² age five and younger. The current program does not differentiate between children with or without disabilities; all eligible children younger than age six may participate. Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 6549 (2018) requires HCA to expand the ABCD program for children with disabilities, "subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose":³

Once enrolled in the program, eligible children with disabilities must be covered until their thirteenth birthday.

Children with disabilities enrolled in the program shall receive all services and benefits received by program clients.

The authority shall pay enhanced fees for program services provided to children with disabilities enrolled in the program to dentists and dental hygienists certified to provide program services to children with disabilities. To receive certification to provide program services to children with disabilities, a dentist or dental hygienist must: (a) Be licensed under Title 18 RCW; and (b) Complete a course on treating children with disabilities as defined by the authority in rule.

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.⁴

¹ The Arcora Foundation was formerly known as the Washington Dental Service Foundation.

² Clients eligible under one of the following medical assistance programs are eligible for the ABCD program: (i) Categorically needy program (CNP); (ii) Limited casualty program-medically needy program (LCP-MNP); (iii) Children's health program; or (iv) State children's health insurance program (SCHIP).

³ Substitute Senate Bill 6549; Chapter 156; Laws of 2018; Access to Baby and Child Dentistry Program—Children with Disabilities, from <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6549-S.SL.pdf>, accessed on August 29, 2019.

⁴ Ibid.

Access to ABCD Program
December 15, 2019

Barriers to implementation

HCA must obtain approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to receive federal funding (match) for any new or expanded Apple Health benefit. CMS communicated to HCA in June 2018 that HCA cannot obtain CMS approval to receive federal match if HCA intends only to reimburse additional, enhanced fees to ABCD-certified providers for rendering services to children who are:

- Greater than five years old and less than thirteen years old; and
- Enrolled in the Developmental Disabilities Administration's (DDA) home and community based waiver services (per WAC 182-515-1510).

CMS provided technical guidance advising HCA that additional policy provisions to justify the enhanced reimbursement rate would be acceptable to CMS.

At the request of the prime sponsor for SSB 6549, HCA worked with legislative staff to resolve this issue with CMS through Senate Bill (SB) 5976 (2019),⁵ which includes:

- New bill language that further justifies the enhanced reimbursement rate; and
- A new cost model with results that are close to the allotted funding from the 2018 session.

However, SB 5976 did not move out of committee during the 2019 legislative session. HCA anticipates additional legislative action on the bill during the 2020 session to enable ABCD program expansion. Meanwhile, HCA has neither implemented the ABCD program expansion, nor used any funding that the Legislature allotted for the program expansion.

Conclusion

Barriers to implementation prevent us from launching the ABCD program expansion and reporting data about both provider participation and children receiving treatment, per the original intent. We communicated this in our 2018 legislative report.⁶ HCA continues to work with CMS and the Legislature to support the successful expansion of the ABCD program for this specific population.

Anticipating the CMS issue resolution and related 2020 legislative action, HCA respectfully requests that the Legislature move the funding it allotted to HCA for the ABCD program expansion to begin during state fiscal year 2021. This includes adequate funding for the UW and Arcora Foundation curriculum development, training, and certification components.

⁵ SB 5976 – 2019-20 Concerning the access to baby and child dentistry program for children with disabilities., from <https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?BillNumber=5976&Year=2019&Initiative=false>, accessed on August 29, 2019.

⁶ Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program: Expanding to Children with Disabilities, from <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/ssb-6549-access-baby-and-child-dentistry-program-12-15-18.pdf>, accessed on August 29, 2019.

Access to ABCD Program
December 15, 2019