For Immediate Release  
July 24, 2023

**Statement on Proposed Medicare Payment Clarification for Medically Necessary Oral and Dental Health Therapies**

It is well-established that overall health is inextricably linked to oral health. Nevertheless, dental care has long been inaccessible to millions of Medicare beneficiaries, leading to an alarming situation in which two-thirds of older Americans have periodontal disease and one-fifth have lost all of their teeth. Untreated oral conditions also significantly increase beneficiaries’ risk of suffering chronic conditions, resulting in impaired well-being, shorter lives, and higher Medicare costs. As a result, the Consortium is pleased to welcome the proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2024, which proposes to take another important step forward for Medicare beneficiaries and oral systemic health.

Last year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) took an historic first step when it clarified in the Physician Fee Schedule for 2023 that Medicare payment is available for dental services that are inextricably linked to and substantially related and integral to the clinical success of Medicare-covered medical services. On that basis, CMS specifically recognized payment in the context of organ transplant surgery, cardiac valve replacement, valvuloplasty procedures, and head and neck cancers. Importantly, the 2023 Physician Fee Schedule also established an annual process enabling stakeholders to nominate additional clinical scenarios for Medicare payment. Implemented this calendar year, the new nominations process marks the first time stakeholders have been able to propose for CMS’ formal consideration covered medical services for which clinical evidence demonstrates that dental care is inextricably linked and substantially related and integral to their clinical success. In response, CMS received numerous nominations spanning a broad range of medical conditions and covered services.

In the proposed Physician Fee Schedule for 2024, the Agency proposes clarification of payment for:

- Dental and oral examinations performed as part of a comprehensive workup for Medicare beneficiaries with cancer prior to the administration of chemotherapy, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, and high-dose bone-modifying agents (antiresorptive therapy).

- Diagnostic and treatment services (which may include imaging, anesthesia, operating room use, and other ancillary services) to eliminate oral or dental infection prior to or concurrent with the administration of chemotherapy, CAR T-cell therapy, and high-dose bone-modifying agents.

- Dental and oral examinations as well as diagnostic and treatment services for beneficiaries receiving Medicare-covered treatment for head and neck cancer, whether primary or metastatic, regardless of site of origin, and regardless of initial modality of treatment.
In addition, CMS requested comments on whether payment should also be made for beneficiaries receiving radiation therapy and encouraged stakeholders to submit additional nominations for potential inclusion in the proposed Physician Fee Schedule for 2025. Towards that end, CMS provided valuable insights into their decision making process that will aid in the targeting of future nominations.

For these reasons, the Consortium applauds the Biden Administration and the exemplary team at CMS, as well as the many Members of Congress who actively urged CMS to further clarify the Medicare program’s payment of medically necessary oral and dental services. With nearly two-thirds of each year’s cancer diagnoses suffered by Americans aged 65 and older, the efforts taken by these leaders to further clarify Medicare payment policy will have a direct and meaningful impact in the lives of millions of beneficiaries and their families.

Chemotherapy is associated with serious oral and systemic side effects, including mucositis, sepsis, oral bleeding, candidiasis, and salivary changes. Similarly, radiation therapy can permanently damage tissue and put patients at risk for oral complications, including xerostomia, mucositis, trismus, severe tooth decay, dysphagia, dysgeusia, and medication-related osteonecrosis of the jaw (MRONJ), the latter of which is also a regular consequence of high-dose bisphosphonate treatment for breast cancer and antiangiogenic therapies to treat multiple myeloma.

“By further clarifying Medicare payment of medically necessary dental care for beneficiaries with cancer, CMS is charting an important course to improved outcomes and lower costs,” said Dr. Judith Haber on behalf of the Sante Fe Group. “Cancer strikes nearly one million older Americans annually, and CMS’ proposal will help ensure they have access to the medically necessary oral care they need.”

“We applaud this enhanced clarification of Medicare payment policy and the progress it makes towards more equitable health care for people who rely on Medicare for their health insurance,” said Melissa Burroughs, Director for Strategic Partnerships at Families USA. “In this rule, CMS demonstrates it heard stakeholders’ request for more clarity on how to effectively seek additional payment clarification, and what it has provided will be of tremendous help.”

Due to a shared conviction that Medicare and its beneficiaries should not be without the vital clinical and fiscal benefits of medically necessary oral and dental care, more than 240 leading organizations joined as signatories of the Consortium’s Community Statement to urge the Administration and Congress to explore options for extending evidence-based treatment to all Medicare beneficiaries.

“For decades, Medicare beneficiaries suffered due to a lack of access to medically necessary dental care,” said Center for Medicare Advocacy Executive Director Judith Stein. “Thanks to the evidence-based action the Medicare program continues to take, we are moving closer and closer to a future of better health, improved quality of life, and greater program equity.”

The Consortium will once again be engaged in the rulemaking process as we work to secure adoption of CMS’ proposal and pursue the implementation of all such payment clarifications consistent with their intent. Formal comments will be submitted, and community leaders will lend their expertise as the Administration works to formalize and implement 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  
ABLE NH (Advocates Building Lasting Equality in NH)  
ACA Consumer Advocacy  
Acuity Specialists  
Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma Research Foundation  
AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
Alliance for Retired Americans  
Allies for Independence  
ALS Association  
American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry  
American Academy of Nursing  
American Academy of Oral Medicine  
American Academy of Oral Systemic Health  
American Academy of Periodontology  
American Association for Community Dental Programs  
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research  
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Dental Educators  
American Association of Diabetes Educators  
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons  
American Association of Kidney Patients  
American Association of Nurse Practitioners  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Emergency Physicians  
American College of Gastroenterology  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Dental Assistants Association  
American Dental Education Association  
American Dental Hygienists’ Association  
American Diabetes Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Hearing 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 Radiology 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  
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  
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  
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality  
Haleon  
Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing  
Hawaii Oral Health Coalition  
Hawaii 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 Dentists for Health Equity
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 Council for Behavioral Health
National Council on Aging
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
Special Care Dentistry Association
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