

**California Department of Health Care Services
Proposed Trailer Bill Legislation**

Evidence-Based Dental Practices

FACT SHEET

Issue Title: Evidence-Based Dental Practices. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) proposes to update existing law to align standards of dental care with evidence-based practices and nationally recognized guidelines for the Medi-Cal population.

Background: State law establishes Medi-Cal dental services and program administration including undertaking efforts to prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and control costs (Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code Section 14132.88). However, the provision that regulates the standards of dental care for Medi-Cal is outdated and inconsistent with current dental standards of care.

W&I Code Section 14132.88(c) states, “For persons 21 years of age or older, laboratory-processed crowns on posterior teeth are not a covered benefit except when a posterior tooth is necessary as an abutment for any fixed or removable prosthesis.” Stainless steel crowns or very large fillings are the reimbursable treatment solutions if the affected tooth is not an abutment for a fixed or removable prosthesis.

According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association guidelines, a laboratory-processed crown is recommended for custom-fit and long-lasting treatment to restore a tooth to normal function when there is not enough healthy tooth structure remaining to accommodate either a silver filling or tooth colored filling. In standard practice, the stainless steel crown is typically a temporary solution for a permanent tooth until a laboratory-processed crown can be produced.

In addition, existing law requires DHCS to reduce the utilization rate of subgingival curettage and root planing by 41 percent for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries except those residing in a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) or an Intermediate Care Facility for the Developmentally Disabled (ICF-DD) (W&I Code Section 14132.88(e)). This provision was implemented during the State’s fiscal crisis. Subgingival curettage and root planing benefits were subsequently eliminated along with adult dental benefits as part of the optional benefits exclusion.

Full adult dental benefits, including subgingival curettage and root planning, were restored effective January 1, 2018. These services are important to reduce the higher costs of more advanced and costly periodontal procedures and to reduce the need for extractions due to periodontal disease. The statute needs to be updated to reflect these changes.

Justification for the change: DHCS proposes to update existing law to align standards of dental care with evidence-based practices and guidelines consistent with the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association for the Medi-Cal population.

Specifically, this proposal would do the following:

- Clarify that for persons 21 years of age or older, laboratory-processed crowns on posterior teeth are a covered benefit when medically necessary to restore a posterior tooth to normal function per the criteria in the Medi-Cal Dental Manual of Criteria (MOC).
- Require covered dental benefits and accompanying criteria for receipt of services be located in the Medi-Cal Dental MOC.
- Notwithstanding emergency and essential diagnostic and restorative dental services, as specified, require all covered benefits to consider evidence-based practices consistent with the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Dental Association guidelines.
- Remove outdated requirement for DHCS to reduce the rate of subgingival curettage and root planning by 41 percent for beneficiaries, as specified.
- Expand DHCS' authority to implement by bulletin regarding pretreatment documentation to apply to the entire section.
- Require the section be implemented only to the extent any necessary federal approvals are obtained and federal financial participation is available.

Summary of Arguments in Support:

- Align dental standards of care with evidence-based practices and nationally recognized guidelines for the Medi-Cal population, which increase access to more treatment options.

Estimate # and Title: Reg PC 257: Evidence-Based Dental Practices