



California Dental Hygienists' Association
The Voice of Dental Hygiene

March 31, 2015

Mari Cantwell
Chief Deputy Director
California Department of Health Care Services

RE: California's Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver Renewal

Dear Ms. Cantwell,

I am writing to urge DHCS to include a pilot of "Values-based Incentives" for oral health, which is described below, in the California's Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver Renewal.

As you know, the recent California State Auditor's report on the Medi-Cal Dental program was critical of the program and recent legislative hearings have highlighted the need for improvements.

A pilot Values-based Incentive program for oral health in the Medi-Cal Dental program has been designed. Design work was funded through a HRSA grant to the California Department of the Public Health. Through a subcontract from that grant and a year-long process, the Pacific Center for Special Care at the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry (Pacific) worked with a broad stakeholder Advisory Group to design a pilot that could lead to more people in underserved communities having access to oral health care, better health of these groups, and lower cost per capita for achieving all this. This is, of course, the Triple Aim, in this case applied to oral health.

As indicated in the attached Preliminary Design for this pilot, to make any real progress in addressing the significant oral health disparities that currently exist in California, it is essential that efforts of oral health providers be refocused on improving the health of the eligible population. This pilot is a way to do this. The main idea of the pilot is to use incentives based on oral health outcomes to drive providers and community partners to use delivery methods that have been developed as a part of the very successful Virtual Dental Home pilot that resulted in the passage of AB1174 last year. This system has demonstrated results in reaching people who do not traditionally receive dental care and being able to focus on prevention and early intervention.

The Children's Dental Health Project recently sent DHCS a report, funded by the California Health Care Foundation called Meeting the Triple Aim for Children's Oral Health: Recommendations for Patient-Centered Pediatric Oral Health Care in Medi-Cal. The report highlights the need to move the Medi-Cal Dental Program from paying for volume to paying for value and specifically recommends that California pursue the value-based incentive pilot described here.

In order for this pilot to take place, it is necessary that it have CMS waiver authority. I understand that the proposal to include this pilot in California's Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver Renewal was presented to DHCS. However, it is not included in the Medi-Cal 2020 – 1115 Waiver Renewal Concept Paper recently released.

The crisis in oral health disparities in California is large growing and will grow worse with the increase in eligible people and little ability under the current system to increase capacity. Moving the payment system for oral health from volume to value and adopting delivery systems that bring care to where people are, use allied personnel at the top of their levels of skill and education, and emphasize prevention and early intervention are viable ways to make a real difference.

The California Dental Hygienist's Association urges you to significantly address the oral health problems we face as a state by including the Value-based Incentive program for oral health in California's Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver Renewal.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karine Strickland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karine" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Strickland".

Karine Strickland, RDHAP, BS
CDHA President