

## Clinical Focus: Medical Care and Dental Care

We have long recognized the importance of dental health in the management of the member's overall health. Several years ago, our Dental Programs began to offer extended dental benefits to reduce oral infection or inflammation in members with heart disease, diabetes, and women who were pregnant. We also offer additional dental benefits to those members with a previous diagnosis of oral cancer to help with the side effects of treatment and to cover pre-diagnostic testing for early identification of new primary oral cancer lesions.



All of this means change for your dental practice—both in your patients' coverage for dental care and in your interaction with other medical and dental professionals in helping to give your patients optimal care. It is important to know that the dental team is being recognized not only for helping a patient maintain his or her oral health, but also for serving as an integral part of the larger team that keeps the patient healthy.

Our Dental plans are trying to change the way that dental care is being delivered by our provider community. Our increased emphasis on diagnostic and preventive care will help to prevent or reverse the development of problems. Our ability to manage both the medical and dental health of our members has given us additional outreach tools to identify our members who need our help the most. Through our outreach in encouraging members with chronic conditions to utilize their dental benefits to working with our medical colleagues to talk to our members about the importance of dental care in their overall health has elevated the importance of dental care as an equal component to that of medical care in managing the person's overall health.

Under the Affordable Care Act which went into effect in 2014 and has been updated yearly, each state had the ability to create an Exchange that would offer health insurance for individuals and small groups. If a state chose not to create their own exchange, they were required to use a Federal Exchange as an alternative. Regardless of the method chosen, the goal was to allow individuals and small groups that would otherwise not have access to medical and dental care, be able to shop and purchase these benefits in an internet based marketplace. The fact that children's dental care is a required essential health benefit in this marketplace strengthens the role that dental care brings to the table.

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You, our dental providers are the conduit of managing our members' dental health. Thank you for the services that you provide to our members.