

Networks for Oral Health Integration Within the Maternal and Child Health Safety Net

Colorado



Environmental Scan Results 2020

Executive Summary

In 2019, Colorado was the second most populated and second most racially diverse state in the *Rocky Mountain Network of Oral Health (RoMoNOH)* and the 21st most populated state in the nation. Colorado has one of the most expansive scope of practice laws related to the practice of dental hygiene in the nation. In 2012, Colorado expanded Medicaid eligibility rules, which has led to increased enrollment for the eligible population. This report focuses on Medicaid reimbursement only and does not address private payers.

Community Water Fluoridation

- In 2018, 74.9 percent of the population was on community water systems receiving fluoridated water, which is on par with the national average of 73 percent and the highest percentage within RoMoNOH.

Fluoride Varnish Application

- Children from birth through age 4 at any caries risk level can receive up to two fluoride varnish applications per year, and those at a high caries risk level can receive two additional applications for a total of four applications per year. Children and adolescents ages 5 through 20 can receive up to three fluoride varnish applications per year regardless of risk level. This is the limit for both medical and dental providers combined. Providers are encouraged to work together to avoid duplication.
- Non-dental clinical providers who apply fluoride varnish are required to complete an oral health training course by either *Cavity Free at Three* or *Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum* and to keep proof of completion on file in case of audit.
- Non-dental clinical providers should bill the CPT D1206 code for fluoride varnish application.

- Non-dental clinical providers who apply fluoride varnish are required to use *Cavity Free at Three's* risk assessment.

Fluoride Varnish Billing

The following non-dental clinical providers in Colorado can bill for fluoride varnish application:

- Midwives (have prescriptive authority and thus can bill for oral health services, but do not typically see older infants with dentition)
- Nurse practitioners
- Nurses and medical assistants can apply fluoride varnish if physician delegates the task and codes directly
- Physicians
- Physician assistants

In Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) fluoride varnish application must be itemized with the well-child visit, but reimbursement will be at the current encounter rate.

Dental Hygienist and Dental Therapist Scope of Practice

- Generally, dental hygienists can bill Medicaid directly, although providing specific dental services requires a collaborative agreement with a dentist. Dental hygienists can own a

dental hygiene practice. Dental hygienists have a broad scope of practice.

- Dental therapists are not licensed providers in Colorado.

Teledentistry

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, dental hygienists were engaging in asynchronous teledentistry (e.g., they were collecting information, such as X-rays, to store and forward to supervising dentists to develop a treatment plan for the patient). This was the main teledentistry model in Colorado before the pandemic.
- Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency dental consultation via an interactive connection (synchronous teledentistry) is reimbursable for dentists only. Dentists can bill for synchronous teledentistry visits at parity with in-person visits under limited problem-focused CDT codes, as long as the dentist obtains the patient's consent.

Strengths

- All coding and training requirements are easy to locate online and easy to understand.
- Prenatal Plus is a Medicaid program that offers medical and dental coverage for pregnant women.
- Medicaid allows three different visits (e.g., behavioral, dental, medical) to be billed on one day at one FQHC or other medical facility.
- There are incentives (key performance indicators) to motivate both dentists and medical professionals to prioritize the oral health of their patients.

Challenges

- There is no enhanced encounter reimbursement rate in FQHCs, resulting in unreimbursed expenses for medical professionals who conduct oral assessments and apply fluoride varnish.
- The different age brackets and risk categories indicating when children can receive fluoride varnish application may cause confusion.

Resources

- [2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants: Colorado](#)
- [Cavity-Free at Three](#)

- [Direct Access States](#)
- [Scope of Practice](#)
- [Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum](#)
- [Variation in Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice by State](#)
- [Welcome, Health First Colorado Dental Program Providers](#)

State Project Staff

Kate Kennedy, Quality Initiatives Specialist at Colorado Community Health Network

E-mail: kkennedy@cchn.org

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Staff

Kera Beskin, Project Manager

E-mail: kbeskin@aap.org

NOHI Project

To learn more about the NOHI project, please visit

www.mchoralhealth.org/pdfs/nohi-overview-profiles.pdf



RoMoNOH
ROCKY MOUNTAIN
NETWORK OF ORAL HEALTH

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