

Dental OfficeLink Updates™

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Welcome to the latest edition of Dental OfficeLink Updates (formerly Dental Dialog). As always, we bring you regular updates and relevant news for your office.

The ongoing hygienist shortage

Dental assistants and hygienists make up the greatest number of the oral health care workforce. To ensure that your practice is one that hygienists and assistants want to work for, take a look at your office culture. | [page 4](#)



Notices

CMS opt-out providers can now be reimbursed for providing dental services to Medicare Advantage members

Beginning January 1, 2022, providers who have opted out of participation with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will now be allowed to participate in Aetna Medicare Advantage plans with dental benefits for the provision of dental services. New guidance from CMS will now allow CMS opt-out providers to be reimbursed for providing supplemental dental services to Medicare Advantage members with dental benefits.

Previously, CMS guidelines prohibited Aetna® from reimbursing providers that did not participate with CMS for any services provided to Medicare Advantage members.

Watch for a letter from Aetna that will provide more details on this change. You do not need to do anything right now.



Important reminders

Permission needed to use offshore entities

An offshore entity is an individual or entity that is physically located outside of the United States or one of its territories.

If you are a participating provider in our PPO or DMO[®] plans and you have opted out of Aetna Dental[®] Medicare Advantage, then, in accordance with your commercial participation agreement with Aetna[®], you must request permission to use an offshore entity for any services where the offshore entity may receive, process, transfer, handle, store or access the protected health information (PHI) of Aetna Dental members.

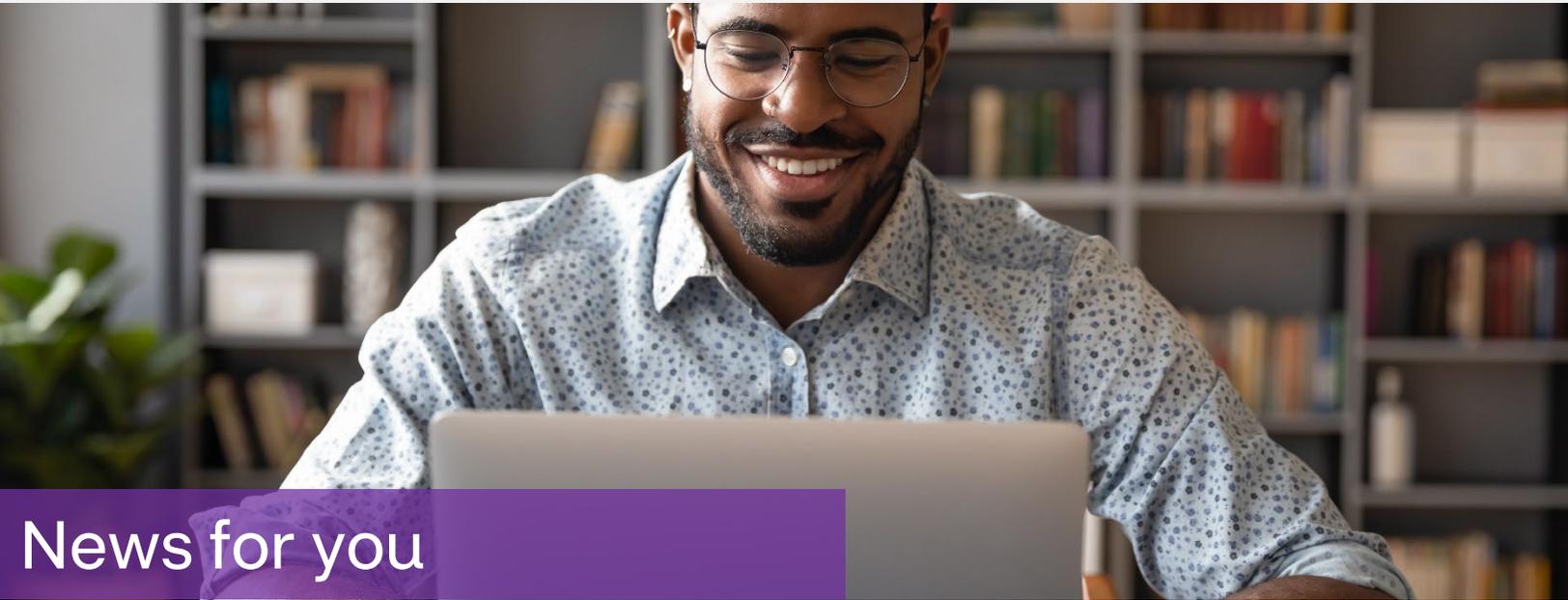
To request permission to perform offshore services, submit a [Commercial Dental Offshore Services Attestation form](#). If you are already using an offshore entity, please submit an attestation form as soon as possible.

If you are a provider who participates in the Aetna Dental Medicare Advantage network, please refer to the [FDR guidebook \(PDF\)](#).

Sign up for electronic payments and Explanation of Benefits (EOB) documents

To receive your payments and statements faster, we encourage you to enroll for direct deposit payments and to begin receiving your EOB documents through your selected vendor.

Enroll at [Payer Enrollment Services](#).



News for you

Look to your office culture to help with hiring

Dental assistants and hygienists make up the greatest number of the oral health care workforce. Today's practices often employ two to three dental assistants for every one dentist.

According to the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute, more than 80% of owner dentists who are currently hiring find the recruitment of dental hygienists and assistants to be very challenging.¹

The pandemic worsened the trend, which now shows that some dental hygienists and assistants are permanently leaving the workforce.

Why are hygienists leaving?

The American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) cites the following reasons:²

- They don't want to work as a hygienist until after the COVID-19 pandemic is under control (48.3%)
- They have concerns about adherence to workplace/safety standards (12.7%)
- They don't want to work as a hygienist any longer (11.2%)
- They have childcare concerns (10.7%)
- Other reasons (these include medical issues, retirement, accepting a job in a different field, inability to wear/tolerate PPE, relocation and a too-high salary reduction) (17.1%)

Assistants left practices during the shutdown also because of a lack of communication. Many of them looked to social media, which might have provided some support but also might have promoted fear and misinformation.

How to attract hygienists to your practice

To ensure that your practice is one that hygienists and assistants want to work for, take a look at your work culture. You can help promote a healthy work/life balance by offering:

- Flexible work schedules and daily breaks
- Routine and consistent communication from leadership
- Refreshments in the break room
- The latest technology, instruments and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Regular expressions of appreciation

We're here to help

The Aetna Dental® network team is here to help. Call the National Dentist Hotline at **1-800-451-7715 (TTY: 711)**.

¹Versaci, MB. [Understaffed and ready to hire, dentists face applicant shortages as they emerge from COVID-19 pandemic](#). ADA News. June 9, 2021. Accessed on October 14, 2021.

²Gurenlian JR, Morrissey R, Estrich CG, et al. [Employment patterns of dental hygienists in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Journal of Dental Hygienists. February 2021; 95(1): 17–24. Accessed on October 14, 2021.





Medicare updates

Aetna Medicare network membership will more than double in 2022

What you need to know

As a network dentist, you'll be able to treat all Aetna Dental® Medicare Advantage members. You'll be reimbursed according to the PPO fee schedule you have with us even if the member says they have an HMO, DSNP, HMO-POS or PPO plan.

We're here for you

If you have any questions, you can contact our dedicated Medicare Provider Services team. They offer personalized customer service. And they can help you with Medicare dental plan benefits. Just call **1-800-624-0756 (TTY: 711)**.

Thank you for participating as a dental provider in our portfolio of products. We value your participation in our network.

Aetna Dental® Medicare Advantage providers — stay in compliance

Do you know that dentists are considered First Tier, Downstream, and Related entities (FDRs) based on your contract with Aetna®? The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires all FDRs to have an effective compliance program.

What are the requirements?

- Distribute either the [CVS Health Code of Conduct \(PDF\)](#) or your own conduct standards or compliance policies to employees/subcontractors.

- Perform exclusion screenings on employees/subcontractors both prior to hiring or contracting and monthly thereafter to ensure that they are not excluded from participating in federal programs. You must enter the names of your employees/subcontractors into both the [Office of Inspector General](#) site and the [Exclusions page of SAM.gov](#) to determine if any of them are excluded. If any of them are, you must remove them from work related to Aetna Medicare, and you must let Aetna know about the exclusion.
- Have a process in place for employees/subcontractors to report compliance and fraud, waste and abuse issues. If any of those issues affect Aetna, you must report the problem to Aetna. To meet this requirement, you may, for example, display our [reporting poster \(PDF\)](#).
- Oversee any subcontractor that performs services for Aetna to ensure that the subcontractor complies with the CMS compliance program.

How to comply

More details about CMS compliance requirements and how to meet them are outlined in the [FDR Guidebook \(PDF\)](#), which also provides helpful tools that you can use to determine whether you are meeting requirements. If you are not meeting any of these requirements, we encourage you to make corrections to your processes.

Ask questions

[Send us an email message](#) and we can work with you to develop a Corrective Action Plan.

A photograph of two women sitting on a couch in a modern office setting, engaged in a conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a maroon top, and the woman on the right is wearing a dark blazer over a teal top. A laptop is open on the table in front of them. A purple banner with the text 'How to reach us' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

How to reach us

Phone numbers

National Dentist Hotline

Have a question about the PPO or DMO network, claim status, member eligibility, contact information or DMO® supplies? Call the National Dentist Hotline at **1-800-451-7715 (TTY: 711)**.

Dentist Contracting Hotline

For PPO contract information, call the Dentist Contracting Hotline at **1-800-776-0537 (TTY: 711)**.

Medicare Dentist Hotline

Have a question or need help with our Medicare plans? Please reach out to our dedicated Medicare Provider Services team. They offer personalized customer service and can help you with Medicare eligibility, claims or dental plan benefits questions. Call **1-800-624-0756 (TTY: 711)**.

Web and mailing addresses

On the [Aetna Dental website](#), you can:

- Update your personal information, including your National Provider Identifier (NPI) and email address
- View dental office guides
- Take continuing education courses, and more

Northeast region (CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV)

Aetna Dental
PO Box 14080
Lexington, KY 40512-4080

South region (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX)

Aetna Dental
PO Box 14597
Lexington, KY 40512-4597

West region (AZ, CA, CO, HI, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, NE, NM, NV, OH, OR, UT, WA, WI)

Aetna Dental
PO Box 10462
Van Nuys, CA 91410

Aetna PPO grievances and appeals

Call the Dentist Contracting Hotline at **1-800-776-0537 (TTY: 711)** for the correct mailing address.

CA Language Assistance Program

For free interpretation services, call **1-800-525-3148 (TTY: 711)**.

Comments and suggestions

Please [send us an email](#) if you have comments or suggestions. We welcome them.

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Aetna® does not assume any liability in connection with the use or implementation of any techniques, policies or procedures discussed in this newsletter.

While this information is believed to be accurate as of the print date, it is subject to change. Refer to AetnaDental.com for more information about Aetna® networks.

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