



CLINICAL MEDICAL POLICY	
Policy Name:	Sedation and Anesthesia for Dental Procedures
Policy Number:	MP-154-MD-PA
Responsible Department(s):	Medical Management
Provider Notice/Issue Date:	09/28/2026
Effective Date:	12/01/2026
Next Annual Review:	12/2027
Implementation Date:	03/18/2026
Products:	Highmark Wholecare SM Medicaid
Application:	All participating hospitals and providers
Page Number(s):	1 of 6

Policy History

Date	Action
12/01/2026	Provider Effective date
08/27/2026	PARP Approval
03/18/2026	QI/UM Committee review
03/18/2026	Policy initially developed

Disclaimer

Highmark WholecareSM medical policy is intended to serve only as a general reference resource regarding coverage for the services described. This policy does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to govern or otherwise influence medical decisions.

Policy Statement

Highmark WholecareSM may provide coverage under the medical-surgical benefits of the Company's Medicaid products for medically necessary sedation and/or anesthesia for dental procedures. This policy is designed to address medical necessity guidelines that are appropriate for the majority of individuals with a particular disease, illness or condition. Each person's unique clinical circumstances warrant individual consideration, based upon review of applicable medical records.

(Current applicable Pennsylvania HealthChoices Agreement Section V. Program Requirements, B. Prior Authorization of Services, 1. General Prior Authorization Requirements.)

Definitions

Prior Authorization Review Panel (PARP) – A panel of representatives from within the PA Department of Human Services who have been assigned organizational responsibility for the review, approval and denial of all PH-MCO Prior Authorization policies and procedures.

Intravenous (IV) Sedation - a method of conscious sedation that involves the administration of sedative drugs through the IV route, allowing for rapid titration of dosage to achieve varying levels of sedation while enabling patients to maintain patent airways and respond to verbal commands. This technique is commonly used in dental practices and requires specialized training and monitoring due to potential risks and complications.

IV Moderate Sedation - a drug-induced depression of consciousness during which patients respond purposefully to verbal commands, either alone or accompanied by light tactile stimulation. No interventions are required to maintain a patent airway, and spontaneous ventilation is adequate. Cardiovascular function is usually maintained.

IV Deep Sedation - a drug-induced depression of consciousness during which patients cannot be easily aroused but respond purposefully following repeated or painful stimulation. The ability to independently maintain ventilatory function may be impaired. Patients may require assistance in maintaining a patent airway, and spontaneous ventilation may be inadequate. Cardiovascular function is usually maintained.

General Anesthesia - a drug-induced loss of consciousness during which patients are not arousable, even by painful stimulation. The ability to independently maintain ventilatory function is often impaired. Patients often require assistance in maintaining a patent airway, and positive pressure ventilation may be required because of depressed spontaneous ventilation or drug-induced depression of neuromuscular function. Cardiovascular function may be impaired.

Procedures

1. Intravenous (IV) moderate sedation, IV deep sedation or general anesthesia for dental procedures may be considered medically necessary when ANY of the following criteria are met, along with the place of service-specific criteria listed in sections 2 or 3 below:
 - A. Complex and extensive surgical procedures such as two (2) or more impacted teeth in two (2) or more quadrants, or two (2) or more extractions of permanent teeth per quadrant in at least two (2) quadrants; OR
 - B. Pediatric patient with a documented history of uncooperative behaviors that may result in the compromised safety of the patient, healthcare provider and/or office staff; OR
 - C. Pediatric patient with four (4) or more restorative dental procedures.
2. Intravenous (IV) Sedation or general anesthesia for dental procedure(s) performed **in-office** may be considered medically necessary when an individual presents with ANY of the following conditions:
 - A. Moderate or situational anxiety; OR
 - B. The need to extract two (2) or more impacted teeth in two (2) or more quadrants; OR

- C. The need to extract two (2) or more permanent teeth per quadrant involving two (2) or more quadrants; OR
 - D. Pediatric treatment with limited need (four [4] to six [6] teeth requiring restoration, pulpotomy, or extraction); OR
 - E. Pediatric patient with social impact conditions which requires all treatment to be completed during a single visit; OR
 - F. Pediatric treatment for a patient under the age of eight (8) with an ASA I or II classification (see *Informational* section below); OR
 - G. Pediatric treatment for a patient under the age of eight (8) with an uncompromised airway.
3. IV Sedation or general anesthesia for dental procedure(s) performed at an **ambulatory surgery center (ASC) or as hospital outpatient** may be considered medically necessary when an individual presents with ANY of the following conditions:
- A. Compromising medical comorbidities; OR
 - B. The need to extract two (2) or more impacted teeth in two (2) or more quadrants in combination with a major medical comorbidity; OR
 - C. The need to extract two (2) or more permanent teeth per quadrant involving two (2) or more quadrants in combination with a major medical comorbidity; OR
 - D. State regulations or lack of access to care permit treatment in an ASC when in-office approval conditions are met; OR
 - E. Pediatric treatment with a combination of at least four (4) teeth requiring restoration, pulpotomy, or extraction of primary teeth and the presence of at least one (1) major medical comorbidity (e.g., documented anxiety disorder, uncontrolled asthma, pre-combative or combative behavior); OR
 - F. Pediatric treatment with social impact conditions which requires completion of all treatment needs during a single visit and in-office IV sedation or general anesthesia is not accessible; OR
 - G. Pediatric treatment with social impact conditions which requires completion of all treatment needs during a single visit in combination with a major medical comorbidity; OR
 - H. Pediatric treatment for a patient under the age of eight (8) with an ASA III or IV classification (see *Informational* section below); OR
 - I. Pediatric treatment for a patient under the age of eight (8) with a compromised or obstructed airway.
4. Documentation Requirements
- ALL of the following must be included in the medical and/or dental records:
- A. Documented extreme anxiety or fear and documentation of failed local anesthesia, inhalation of nitrous oxide, or oral conscious sedation attempts; AND
 - B. Dental and medical records substantiate physical, cognitive, or developmental disability, (e.g., congenital cardiac defect, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, etc.) that would render the patient non-compliant; AND
 - C. Any underlying medical conditions including any allergies or sensitivities to local anesthesia; AND
 - D. Documentation that the pediatric patient has resisted all other conventional behavior management procedures; AND
 - E. Documentation that the pediatric patient has a history of uncooperative behaviors that may result in harm to the pediatric patient, the healthcare provider, and/or the office staff; AND
 - F. Documented history of relevant social impact conditions; AND
 - G. Six (6) months of pre-operative diagnostic radiographs, or intraoral photos if radiographs are not available; AND

- H. Treatment notes that clearly document medical necessity and all relevant dental and medical diagnoses; AND
- I. A complete treatment plan; AND
- J. ASA physical status classification; AND
- K. Referring dentist evaluation report; AND
- L. State-mandated outpatient form, if applicable.

5. Contraindications

Intravenous (IV) moderate sedation, IV deep sedation or general anesthesia for dental procedures would not be considered medically necessary when ANY of the following conditions exist:

- General anesthesia or moderate or deep sedation is requested for the patient's and/or dental provider's convenience
- Individual has a history of tolerating similar dental procedures without the need for sedation
- Individual has a known allergy to oral sedatives or the reversal agents
- Individual has a predisposing medical and/or physical condition that would make general anesthesia unsafe
- Individual is considered cooperative and has minimal dental needs
- There is an alternative option for dental treatment
- Parent or guardian has objected to the sedation or general anesthesia
- The dental procedure has not been previously approved

6. Post Payment Audit Statement

The medical record must include documentation that reflects the medical necessity criteria and is subject to audit by Highmark WholecareSM at any time pursuant to the terms of your provider agreement.

Governing Bodies Approval

CMS

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has no published guidance on this specific topic.

Coding Requirements

Procedure Codes

CPT Code	Description
00170	Anesthesia for intraoral procedures, including biopsy; not otherwise specified
41899	Unlisted procedure, dentoalveolar structures

Informational

The American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) Classification

ASA Physical Status Classification	Definition	Adult Examples	Pediatric Examples
ASA I	A person in good health.	A person who doesn't smoke tobacco products and minimally uses alcohol.	A child in a healthy BMI range for their age.
ASA II	A mild but well-managed or treated condition.	A person who is pregnant, has a mild lung condition, may smoke tobacco products or drinks alcohol socially or has overweight.	A child with mild asthma, a well-managed abnormal heart rhythm (dysrhythmias) or mild obstructive sleep apnea.
ASA III	A serious condition that has an impact on a person's overall health.	A person who has a BMI greater than 40, alcohol use disorder, an implanted pacemaker or is on dialysis regularly.	A child with severe asthma, a heart abnormality, epilepsy or severe obstructive sleep apnea.
ASA IV	A severe condition that's life-threatening.	A person with a severe infection (sepsis), has severe heart disease or isn't on dialysis regularly.	A child with congestive heart failure, is dependent on a ventilator or is in shock.
ASA V	A life-threatening condition that needs immediate surgery to increase survival odds.	A person with an opening in the top part of their aorta (ruptured aneurysm), brain bleeding or multiorgan dysfunction.	A child with brain bleeding (intracranial hemorrhage), respiratory failure or severe liver disease.
ASA VI	A deceased person who is an organ donor.	The adult is deceased.	The child is deceased.

Cleveland Clinic (2023)

Reimbursement

Participating facilities will be reimbursed per their Highmark WholecareSM contract.

Reference Sources

Cleveland Clinic. ASA Physical Status Classification System. April 12, 2023. Accessed on February 18, 2026.

Armfield J, Marek CL. 14 - Patients who are anxious or fearful, Diagnosis and Treatment Planning in Dentistry (Third Edition). 2017. Accessed on February 18, 2026.

American Dental Association (ADA). Guidelines for the Use of Sedation and General Anesthesia by Dentists. ADA House of Delegates. October 2016. Accessed on February 18, 2026.