



Medicare provider numbers for dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists who are independently claiming under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule

From 1 July 2022, dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists can access Medicare provider numbers to directly claim for services under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS). This factsheet explains how to apply for a Medicare provider number, the services that can be claimed, and where to find more information.

Why is this change occurring?

On 1 July 2020, following approval by the COAG Health Council, the Dental Board of Australia introduced a new Scope of Practice Registration Standard for dental practitioners.

This decision was taken after an independent review by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care assessed the patient safety implications and consumer benefit of the proposed change. The review found no evidence that removing the structured professional relationship between a dentist and a dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist, will have an adverse effect on patient safety and quality; and that it may increase the capacity of the dental workforce and provide greater access to services and reduced wait times for services in rural and remote communities.

Accordingly, dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists are no longer required to work in a structured professional relationship with a dentist, meaning they can practice independently within the scope of their education, training and competence, if they choose.

What is happening on 1 July 2022?

The CDBS is delivered under the [Dental Benefits Act 2008](#) and subordinate [Dental Benefits Rules 2014](#) (the Rules). The Rules will be amended from 1 July 2022 enabling dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists to directly claim for some CDBS services using their own provider number. The services that can be directly claimed will depend on your registration type.

Is it mandatory for dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists to apply for a Medicare provider number?

The CDBS changes coming into effect from 1 July 2022 are an **'opt-in'** arrangement. This means current claiming arrangements remain in place i.e., a dentist can continue to claim for CDBS services rendered by a dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist, unless a dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist chooses to apply for a provider number and use it to claim for services delivered at a given dental practice.

Opting into these arrangements is a voluntary decision for individual dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists to make in consultation with their employer. Practitioners are encouraged to discuss these options with their employer.

When and how do I apply for a Medicare provider number?

From 20 June 2022, dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists can apply to Services Australia for an initial Medicare provider number using the [Application for a Medicare provider number and/or prescriber number for allied health and non-medical health professionals \(HW093\) form](#). It will be available on the Services Australia website from 20 June 2022.

How long will it take to receive my Medicare provider number?

The initial application for a Medicare provider number is manually processed by Services Australia and, depending on the number of applications received, is expected to take a minimum of two weeks to be processed.

Once Services Australia has processed your HW093 application form, practitioners will receive a letter with their Medicare provider number. The Medicare provider number can then be used from 1 July 2022 to directly claim for relevant CDBS services.

What if I need an additional Medicare provider number because I work at more than one dental practice?

Once dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists have received their initial Medicare provider number, they can apply for subsequent Medicare provider numbers online using the Services Australia Health Professional Online Services (HPOS) portal. HPOS is a simple and secure way for eligible providers to do business with Services Australia. Information about how to set-up HPOS access can be found on the [Services Australia website](#).

What services am I eligible to directly claim for under the new CDBS arrangements?

Details on the CDBS items each dental practitioner division is eligible to directly claim from 1 July 2022 is outlined in the [Guide to the CDBS](#). The Guide also provides information on item descriptors, claiming restrictions and benefit amounts.

How does this change affect dentists?

The CDBS changes coming into effect from 1 July 2022 are an **'opt-in'** arrangement. This means current claiming arrangements remain in place i.e., a dentist can continue to claim for CDBS services rendered by a dental hygienist, dental therapist or oral health therapist, unless the dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist chooses to apply for a provider number and use it to claim for services delivered at a given dental practice.

Are there implications for ATO Class Ruling (CR) 2014/7 – Income tax: payments assigned to representative public dentists (RPDs) under the CDBS?

The Department is applying for an amendment to CR 2014/7 to include dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists. Jurisdictions will be advised when the ruling is finalised.

How does this change affect access to services listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule such as referrals to specialists or requests for diagnostic imaging services items?

The changes coming into effect on 1 July 2022 relate to the ability of dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists to claim directly for services delivered under the CDBS.

The changes do not enable dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists to request or refer for any services listed on the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) and provided under Medicare. Dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists will continue to be able to request or refer for MBS services under the auspices of a dentist.

How do CDBS compliance activities work?

The Department monitors practitioners' CDBS billing to protect Australia's health payments system from incorrect claiming, inappropriate practice and fraud. Data of all health practitioners in Australia who bill under the CDBS, including dental practitioners, is analysed to identify potential non-compliance. Compliance activities include:

- provider education to help practitioners learn about compliant billing and prescribing
- targeted campaigns to alert practitioners when their claiming and prescribing patterns may indicate a risk of non-compliance
- audits to ensure all benefits paid comply with the requirements needed to receive them under the *Dental Benefits Act 2008*
- reviews under the Practitioner Review Program (PRP):
 - the PRP identifies and intervenes where practitioners' and corporate entities' activities under the CDBS may indicate potential inappropriate practice
 - where concerns are not able to be resolved under the PRP, we may request a review by the Director of Professional Services Review.
- investigations when there are any concerns of fraud by providers.

Contact us

Please contact DAHM@health.gov.au if you require additional information about the changes outlined in this fact sheet, including the changes to CR 2014/7.

Please contact radiology@health.gov.au if you require additional information about the ability of dental hygienists, dental therapists, and oral health therapists access services under the MBS.