

Member Dentists,

I am sending a brief note to let you know that Delta Dental of Washington (DDWA) will continue to support Member Dentists through the COVID-19 crisis.

We were quick to respond to dental office closures resulting from the Governor's order to stop all elective healthcare procedures in mid-March with two DDWA financial relief programs. In total, we provided \$23.5 Million in financial support to Member Dentists including \$13.5 Million in grants to practices across the state. While we are proud of the support we have provided to date, we recognize the office closures were just the first phase of the economic impact of the pandemic.

We anticipate that Governor Inslee's Proclamation 20-24 prohibiting dental offices from providing non-emergency services and procedures will expire on May 18<sup>th</sup> at noon Pacific Time. As the proclamation ends and dental practices reopen, we recognize that you face a need to significantly change your practice protocols to continue to safely care for your patients. The near-term cost of these changes in your practice will be significant, driven by the need for additional PPE for your staff, inflated PPE supply costs due to scarcity, and changes in office productivity as a result of new social distancing guidelines and implementation of additional cleaning procedures.

As you re-open your practice we will continue to partner with you along the way and help our members (your patients) feel confident when they visit your office for care. We understand the dental office has always been a safe environment, and we want patients to know that the health and safety of your patients, and your staff, is your number one priority. As you return to your practice, you have our commitment that we will:

- **Provide Financial Support.** We are finalizing our plans for a second-wave of financial support for all DDWA Member Dentists. This wave of support will focus on offsetting some of the practice costs you will incur as you resume providing routine care to Delta Dental of Washington patients. We will have more information about this support in the next week. Many Member Dentists have asked about covering costs for infection control, possibly utilizing code D1999 – Unspecified Preventive Procedure, when submitted with treatment. Delta Dental's current national policy is that separate fees for infection control and OSHA compliance are not billable to the patient and this policy cannot be changed in a time frame that would be responsive to the impact of COVID-19. For those reasons, D1999 code submissions filed for infection control and OSHA compliance will not be billable to the patient, **but we at Delta Dental of Washington plan to provide a per patient fee outside of the claims process for a limited time to address the immediate incremental costs driven by COVID-19.** This approach of paying a fee outside of the claims process and notifying providers that D1999 is not billable to the patient is consistent with the approach being taken by other Delta Dental Member Companies.
- **Support offices with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) availability and affordability.** As communicated in our joint letter with the WSDA late last week, we are working with the WSDA to support dentists and their teams across the state in acquiring critically needed PPE at reasonable cost (or no cost where possible). The first supply of KN-95 and procedural masks from our collaboration with the WSDA was made available by the WSDA on Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> and we are working on additional supply. We will share additional information with Member Dentists as it becomes available in the coming days.
- **Increase patient messaging to our Delta Dental of Washington members.** Together with the WSDA, we are developing communications and marketing materials for the public about the significance of resuming routine dental care, its importance to overall health and the precautions dental practices are taking to protect patients. This messaging will also share that the dental office has always been a safe, and sanitary environment and dentists primary focus is the health and safety of their patients.
- **Interim Policies and Guidance.** We've put together a list of interim policies, exceptions and claims submission guidance to help answer your questions and expedite claim processing during these unprecedented times. We will send, and post our guidance on our website [DeltaDentalWA.com](https://www.DeltaDentalWA.com), by Wednesday May 20. We will continue

to review situations that arise in the months ahead to understand where more policy exceptions may be appropriate to adjust for ongoing changes in dentistry. We are committed to working with you and addressing extraordinary circumstances as they arise.

In addition to questions about our ongoing support for our Member Dentists, we have received many questions about our support for DDWA policy holders and subscribers. Last week, we announced a comprehensive Premium Relief Plan that provides four months of financial relief in the form of a 25-percent premium reduction to our policyholders. Delta Dental of Washington subscribers do not need to take any action to receive the relief. The monthly premium reductions will be applied to the customer invoices for coverage beginning July 1; any customers who have paid on an annual basis will receive a refund. (Qualified Dental Plans and DeltaCare® managed care plans, which account for less than 5% of DDWA policyholders are not included in the relief plan.)

The full impact of COVID-19 on oral health and dentistry is still unknown. We will continue to respond to the pandemic as it unfolds with actions that support our Member Dentists, our customers and our team. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Provider Relations team at (206) 528-5332 or [MyDDWAAmbassador@DeltaDentalWA.com](mailto:MyDDWAAmbassador@DeltaDentalWA.com), or to me directly at [AskMark@DeltaDentalWA.com](mailto:AskMark@DeltaDentalWA.com).

We remain committed to helping you and our subscribers through this challenging time. Thank you for your commitment to helping improve the health and smiles of Washingtonians.



**Mark Mitchke**

President and CEO

Delta Dental of Washington & Washington Dental Service