

Delta Dental and Personal Protective Equipment

Delta Dental of Minnesota values our partnership with the members of our provider networks. We also greatly value those front-line dental professionals facing the COVID-19 crisis. We recognize the major challenges related to the acquisition of personal protective equipment (PPE).

The escalating human toll of COVID-19 has been extremely difficult on so many business sectors whom now require PPE as well. From manufacturing to delivery services to retail operations, PPE is the new normal. The demand is so great, that in addition to hospitals and large health systems, states, local governments and countries now compete to purchase these highly sought-after safety resources, especially N-95 masks.

Our Initiatives To Help

Delta Dental is working hard to find meaningful ways to help as we all try to navigate these unprecedented and uncertain times. For example:

- We recently offered independent dental offices monetary advances to assist in their cash flow needs while clinics were unable to operate.
- We made \$1,000,000 in grants to community dental clinics that serve the uninsured and most vulnerable dental patients to help them stay afloat.
- We have provided financial support to hospital front line workers that courageously deliver care to our fellow Minnesotans.
- We have provided financial support to food banks facing record levels of demand for groceries for our neighbors.

Our Initiatives Regarding PPE

The world demand for PPE has increased to such levels that hospitals, medical clinics, and dental offices that have long used masks, eye shields, gowns, and gloves for infection control in direct patient care now face dire supply shortages and increased costs for some products.

We are working to find ways to help support our dental offices with the acquisition of their PPE needs. Our goal is to identify and assist in the procurement of PPE for the safety of the dental providers, their team members and patients.

To date we have ongoing efforts to assist in the direct acquisition of PPE for distribution to dental clinics. We are also exploring how to assist the State of Minnesota in such acquisitions. Like so many others, we are facing complex challenges in acquiring PPE supplies. The unprecedented demand, world-wide shortage, as well as the extensive fraud involving PPE disreputable manufacturers has severely obstructed our progress to help our dental provider partners.

Additional Considerations

Of course, as we look for ways to help our dental providers, we also must responsibly balance the obligations we have to our dental benefit/services customers, a majority of whom are self-insured. These customers directly pay for the cost of dental claims incurred by their employees.

As a result of COVID-19, many of our customers are themselves facing reduced revenue and increased costs for workplace and customer safety precautions, including PPE.

Infection Control Policies and Procedures.

Some providers have asked about our policies regarding infection control costs and how they impact billing additional PPE costs directly to Delta Dental or to Delta Dental members. Delta Dental of Minnesota has long addressed infection control in its Participating Dental Provider Policies and Procedures. Specifically, Section 5(C) of the Delta Dental of Minnesota Participating Dental Provider Policies and Procedures includes this:

5(C): Infection Control: Charges for infection control are to be included in every clinical procedure in the dental office and the cost is considered part of a dental office's general overhead. Infection control may not be billed to Delta Dental or **Subscribers** as a separate procedure. Charges for infection control procedures submitted on a claim form will be **Disallowed** and the **Participating Dentist** may not collect this amount from the **Subscriber**. If collection is made from a member or these services are billed to Delta Dental under a non-descriptive code, the action constitutes non-**Compliance**.

Having said this, since the Governor's Stay at Home directive, we have vigorously searched for ways to help support our dental providers with the needed PPE to safely run your offices. The complexities of this global crisis mean that it is taking time to find PPE solutions for you, your office staff, patients, and our customers. **We ask for your patience as we continue to work through this situation.**