

Fluoride Varnish Policy

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child's first dental visit occur as soon as the first tooth erupts, which is usually between 6 and 12 months of age. Early examination can prevent future costly and painful dental diseases, including dental caries (cavities). Although, dental cavities are the most common childhood disease, it is completely preventable.

Effective Dec. 1, Louisiana Medicaid will be expanding coverage for fluoride varnish applications to allow these services be performed in the physician's office. The intent of providing these services in the physician's office is to improve the overall health of Louisiana children who otherwise may have not received an oral exam through a dental provider, while potentially decreasing future cost of untreated dental diseases in this population.

Fluoride varnish is a gel coating that is applied directly to the teeth to assist in preventing and potentially reversing cavities that have already begun to develop. The American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend fluoride varnish application at least twice per year for children at moderate or high risk of developing cavities. ***Providers shall follow the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry's (AAPD) Caries-Risk Assessment Tool (CAT) to determine if a recipient is at moderate or high risk.***

Providers eligible for reimbursement for these services include physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. In order to qualify for reimbursement, physicians must review the Smiles for Life training module for fluoride varnish and successfully pass the post assessment, at the link provided:

<http://www.smilesforlife2.org/default.aspx?tut=555&pagekey=62948&s1=1281232>

Physicians shall maintain a copy of the successfully completed post assessment certificate in their files for review, if requested by the DHH or its fiscal intermediary.

Physicians are responsible to provide training to participating staff to ensure competency in fluoride varnish applications. The only disciplines that may apply the fluoride varnish are appropriate dental providers, physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. Physicians must maintain documentation in the employee records indicating competency for staff who are involved in this process.

Fluoride varnish application is limited to eligible recipients from ages 6 months through 5 years. Services are limited to once every 6 months.

Providers should utilize HCPCS code D1206 (topical fluoride varnish; therapeutic application for moderate to high caries risk patients) for the application of the varnish. This HCPCS code represents application of the fluoride varnish, as well as performance of an oral health assessment, education of parents and anticipatory guidance. These services are considered inclusive and are not separately reimbursable.

HCPCS code D1206 is only reimbursable when performed on the same date of service as an office visit or preventive screening visit. Providers shall not require recipients return to the office to receive the varnish application.

Reimbursable fluoride varnish services for FQHCs/RHCs are included in the all inclusive encounter; therefore, separate encounters for these services are not allowed and the delivery of fluoride varnish services alone does not constitute an encounter visit.