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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CMS Selects Smiles for Life as Required Oral Health Training for 2026 MIPS Improvement Activity**

*New rule elevates medical-dental integration and highlights the role of primary care in oral health outcomes*

**Leawood, KS — January 27, 2026** — Smiles for Life, the nation’s leading provider of free oral health education for primary care clinicians, today announced its formal inclusion in a new oral health–related Improvement Activity within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) 2026 Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). The designation underscores CMS’s recognition of oral health as a critical component of whole-person care and strengthens the integration of oral health competencies across primary care settings.

The Merit-based Incentive Payment System is a Medicare program that adjusts clinician reimbursement based on quality, cost, improvement activities, and use of electronic health records. Under the 2026 rule, CMS introduced three new Improvement Activities — including one focused exclusively on oral health — marking a significant step forward for medical-dental integration nationwide.

To fulfill requirements for this new activity, Medicare-participating physicians must complete oral health training through **Smiles for Life**, a free, evidence-based online curriculum used widely across primary care, pediatrics, nursing, geriatrics, and other health disciplines. Completion of two of the curriculum’s courses - *The Oral Examination* and *Geriatric Oral Health* - satisfies the educational requirement of the activity.

Beyond training, eligible clinicians must implement a referral process for oral health needs, collaborate with local dental providers, and document oral health findings in the patient record. These steps aim to enhance coordination between medical and dental teams and ensure timely follow-up care for patients.

“Primary care clinicians are often the first to identify oral health concerns,” said **Karlynn Sievers, MD, Editor of Smiles for Life**. “CMS’s decision to formally include oral health within MIPS improvement activities elevates the importance of early detection and coordinated care. Smiles for Life is proud to provide clinicians with the tools, training, and confidence they need to meet these new requirements.”

The Smiles for Life curriculum, accessible nationwide at no cost, offers continuing education credits across disciplines. Courses cover essential topics including oral-systemic health, pediatric and geriatric oral health, caries risk assessment, fluoride varnish application, and strategies for interprofessional practice.

For more information or to access Smiles for Life courses, visit [www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.org](http://www.smilesforlifeoralhealth.org).

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## **About Smiles for Life**

Smiles for Life is the nation's most widely used free oral health curriculum for primary care clinicians. Developed by an interprofessional team of experts, the curriculum provides evidence-based training designed to improve oral health knowledge, enhance preventive care, and strengthen collaboration between medical and dental professionals. Smiles for Life offers continuing education credits and is endorsed by dozens of national professional organizations.

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