09-E0000-51

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Reviewed: 09/25/25

Revised: 10/15/25

Subject: Speech Generating Devices

THIS MEDICAL COVERAGE GUIDELINE IS NOT AN AUTHORIZATION, CERTIFICATION, EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS, OR A GUARANTEE OF PAYMENT, NOR DOES IT SUBSTITUTE FOR OR CONSTITUTE MEDICAL ADVICE. ALL MEDICAL DECISIONS ARE SOLELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PATIENT AND PHYSICIAN. BENEFITS ARE DETERMINED BY THE GROUP CONTRACT, MEMBER BENEFIT BOOKLET, AND/OR INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIBER CERTIFICATE IN EFFECT AT THE TIME SERVICES WERE RENDERED. THIS MEDICAL COVERAGE GUIDELINE APPLIES TO ALL LINES OF BUSINESS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED IN THE PROGRAM EXCEPTIONS SECTION.

Position Statement	Billing/Coding	Reimbursement	Program Exceptions	Definitions	Related Guidelines
Other	References	Updates			

DESCRIPTION:

Speech generating devices, also known as augmentative or alternative communication devices, are electronic devices used for communication by individuals that do not have the ability to speak. These individuals typically have a diagnosis of severe apraxia, aphasia, aphonia, and/or dysarthria, which may be secondary to motor dysfunction, spasticity, tremor, rigidity, or ataxia. Their disability may result from a disease or congenital disorder, such as cerebral palsy (CP), stroke, progressive amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), multiple sclerosis (MS), muscular dystrophy (MD), traumatic or congenital quadriplegia, or traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Speech generating devices are used therapeutically to establish, develop, or maintain the ability to communicate functional needs. These devices or aids are electronic, usually computer-assisted devices. The user inputs letters, words, or phrases to generate synthesized speech and/or printed text.

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are handheld devices that integrate the functions of a small computer with features such as a cell phone, personal organizer, electronic mail or pager. Information may be input via a pen-based system using a stylus and handwriting recognition software, keyboard or downloaded from a personal computer using special cables and software.

POSITION STATEMENT:

Speech generating devices (SGD) **meet the definition of medical necessity** when **ALL** of the following criteria (1 – 7) are met:

1. Prior to the delivery of the speech-generating device (SGD), the individual has had a formal evaluation of their cognitive and communication abilities by a speech-language pathologist (SLP). The formal, written evaluation must include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- Current communication impairment, including the type, severity, language skills, cognitive ability, and anticipated course of the impairment
- An assessment of whether the individual's daily communication needs could be met using other natural modes of communication
- A description of the functional communication goals expected to be achieved and treatment options
- Rationale for selection of a specific device and associated accessories
- Demonstration that the individual possesses a treatment plan that includes a training schedule for the selected device
- The cognitive and physical abilities to effectively use the selected device and any accessories to communicate
- For a subsequent upgrade to a previously issued SGD, information regarding the functional benefit to the individual of the upgrade compared to the initially provided SGD, **AND**

2. The individual's medical condition is one resulting in a severe expressive speech impairment, **AND**
3. The individual's speaking needs cannot be met using natural communication methods, **AND**
4. Other forms of treatment have been considered and ruled out, **AND**
5. The individual's speech impairment will benefit from the device ordered, **AND**
6. A copy of the SLP's written evaluation and recommendation have been forwarded to the individual's treating physician prior to ordering the device, **AND**
7. The SLP performing the individual evaluation is not an employee of or does not have a financial relationship with the supplier of the SGD

Software that enables a laptop computer, desktop computer, or PDA to function as a speech-generating device is covered as an SGD.

Accessories for speech-generating devices include, but are not limited to, access devices that enable selection of letters, words, or symbols by direct or indirect selection techniques. Examples of access devices may include optical head pointers, joysticks, switches, wheelchair integration devices and speech generating device scanning devices. These accessories are covered if the basic coverage criteria for the base device are met and the medical necessity for each accessory is clearly documented in the formal SLP evaluation.

Claims for more than one SGD will be denied as **does not meet the definition of medical necessity** as the additional SGD would be considered primarily for convenience.

Laptop computers, desktop computers, PDAs or other devices that are not dedicated SGDs are **not covered** as they do not meet the definition of durable medical equipment (DME).

Replacement SGD **meets the definition of medical necessity** when it is malfunctioning and cannot be restored to working condition. Documentation from the manufacturer, submitted either electronically or in hard copy, must confirm one of the following:

- The device is lost, stolen or irreparably damaged and cannot be repaired
- The device has reached the Reasonable Useful Lifetime (RUL) or the device is greater than five years old
- Hardware updates cannot restore the device to a functional state

Replacement SGD for the purpose of upgrading technology **does not meet the definition of medical necessity.**

BILLING/CODING INFORMATION:

HCPCS Coding

E2500	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, less than or equal to 8 minutes recording time
E2502	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, greater than 8 minutes, but less than or equal to 20 minutes recording time
E2504	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, greater than 20 minutes, but less than or equal to 40 minutes recording time
E2506	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, greater than 40 minutes recording time
E2508	Speech generating device, synthesized speech, requiring message formulation by spelling and access by physical contact with the device
E2510	Speech generating device, synthesized speech, permitting multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access
E2511	Speech generating software program, for personal computer or personal digital assistant
E2512	Accessory for speech generating device, mounting system
E2513	Accessory for speech generating device, electromyographic sensor (e.g., NeuroNode®) (**Investigational**)

REIMBURSEMENT INFORMATION:

Reimbursement for the following services or accessories is included in the rental or purchase allowance for the speech generating device:

- Applicable software
- Installation of the software program
- Batteries
- Battery chargers
- AC adapters
- Technical support

PROGRAM EXCEPTIONS:

Federal Employee Program (FEP): Follow FEP guidelines.

State Account Organization (SAO): Follow SAO guidelines.

Medicare Advantage products:

The following National Coverage Determination (NCD) was reviewed on the last guideline reviewed date: Speech Generating Devices (50.1) located at cms.gov.

The following Durable Medical Equipment Regional Carrier (DMERC) Local Coverage Determination (LCD) was reviewed on the last guideline reviewed date: Speech Generating Devices (L33739) located at cms.gov.

If this Medical Coverage Guideline contains a step therapy requirement, in compliance with Florida law 627.42393, members or providers may request a step therapy protocol exemption to this requirement if based on medical necessity. The process for requesting a protocol exemption can be found at Coverage Protocol Exemption Request.

DEFINITIONS:

No guideline specific definitions apply.

RELATED GUIDELINES:

Durable Medical Equipment (DME), 09-E0000-01

Prosthetics, 09-L0000-05

OTHER:

None Applicable.

REFERENCES:

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15. Wendt O, Hsu N, Simon K, Dienhart A, Cain L. Effects of an iPad-based Speech-Generating Device Infused into Instruction with the Picture Exchange Communication System for Adolescents and Young Adults with Severe Autism Spectrum Disorder. Behav Modif. 2019;43(6):898-932.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

This Medical Coverage Guideline (MCG) was approved by the Florida Blue Medical Policy and Coverage Committee on 09/25/25.

GUIDELINE UPDATE INFORMATION:

07/15/04	New Medical Coverage Guideline.
07/15/06	Scheduled review (consensus review); no changes to coverage statement; references updated.
08/15/07	Review, coverage statements maintained, guideline reformatted, references updated.
07/15/09	Scheduled review; no change in position statement; references updated.
05/15/14	Revision: Program Exceptions section updated.
06/15/19	Scheduled review. Revised description, maintained position statement, and updated references.
09/15/20	Scheduled review. Maintained position statement and updated references.
09/15/22	Scheduled review. Maintained position statement and updated references.
09/15/24	Scheduled review. Maintained position statement and updated references.
10/01/24	Quarterly CPT/HCPCS coding update, Added E2513. Deleted E2599.
10/15/25	Scheduled review. Added coverage criteria for replacement SGD and coverage statement E2513 (NeuroNode®). Updated references.