Sentara Health Plans

Commercial

Augmentative Communication and Speech Generating Systems, DME 30

Table of Content

Description & Definitions
Criteria
Document History
Coding
Special Notes
References
Keywords

Effective Date	7/1/2026
Next Review Date	3/2027
Coverage Policy	DME 30
Version	11

Member-specific benefits take precedence over medical policy and benefits may vary across plans. Refer to the individual's benefit plan for details *.

Description & Definitions:

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems, to include speech generating devices (SGD), are designed to support the needs of members with complex, significant communication disorders as evidenced by impairments of comprehension, cognition, and/or speech-language production. An AAC device can be used to assist impaired members with communication of ideas, wants and needs.

Types of devices:

- Low-Tech AAC comprises tools and strategies that do not involve electronics and do not require batteries. Examples of Low-tech AAC are PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), symbol charts, communication boards, communication books…
- Mid tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is typically considered the "midway" between a low tech communication device and a high tech communication device (examples Big Mack, Go talk, Quick talker).
- High-tech AAC includes electronic forms of AAC, such as a speech-generating device or an iPad with apps. Mid-tech AAC includes battery-operated devices with simpler functions, such as a limited number of pre-programmed messages.

Criteria:

An augmentative communication device or speech generating system is considered medically necessary for **ALL** of the following:

- Individual has indications of **1 or more** of the following:
  - Individual has degenerative disease causing the speech impairment with **ALL** of the following:
    - The communication device selected should be capable of modification to meet the individual's anticipated needs.
  - Individual is preliterate with **ALL** of the following:
    - It is anticipated they will be able to learn to read, spell, or communicate

        - The communication device selected should be programmable to meet the specific needs of the member to include symbols, pictures, spelling and text capabilities
    - Individual's request is for a synthesized speech device that requires the ability to spell words with **ALL** of the following:
        - Documentation shows that the individual has the ability to spell words
- The device is recommended by the individual's physician
- The speech-language pathologist (SLP) performing the beneficiary evaluation may not be an employee of or have a financial relationship with the supplier of the Speech Generating Devices (SGD).
- A speech language pathologist has conducted a thorough written assessment including **ALL** of the following information:
    - Medical diagnosis
    - Physiological description of the underlying disorder
    - Description of functional limitation
    - Nature and severity of speech or communication impairment
    - Prognosis for improvement (or deterioration)
    - Medical need for the device with **1 of the following**:
        - Request is for a low technology system device or tools and strategies that do not involve electronics and do not require batteries (i.e. Picture Exchange Communication System, symbol charts, communication boards, communication books.
        - Mid tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is typically considered the "midway" between a low tech communication device and a high tech communication device (examples Big Mack, Go talk, Quick talker).
        - High technology device is requested, must be demonstrated that a trial of an equally equipped low to mid technology communication system (e.g. Picture Exchange Communication System, symbol charts, communication boards, communication books, Big Mack, Go talk, Quick talker) over a period of 90 days is inadequate to meet the individual's current functional communication needs (ability to direct behavior of caregivers, report medical status and complaints, participate in decision making). Failure is defined as the demonstrated inability of the device to meet the functional communication needs of the member rather than other difficulties with the device i.e. distractions from other programs on the device, ability of the device to tolerate normal wear and tear, etc. Clinical documentation will be used to support the adequacy of the trial and failure of the low technology device
    - Therapeutic history including speech, occupational, and/or physical therapies
    - Documentation of member's cognitive ability to utilize the specific device
    - Documentation of the visual, auditory, language and motor ability to utilize the selected system
    - Documentation of the specific daily functional communication needs
    - Expected functional communication goals with the device
    - Plan of care for the device: anticipated training needs, programming needs, evaluations, etc.
- Authorization is for **1 or more** of the following:
    - 30-60 day rental period
    - Purchase when **1 or more** of the following criteria are met:
        - A 30-60 day trial with the device has been completed and documentation by the speech-language pathologist that the chosen device is the one most appropriate to meet the individual's medical needs has been provided.
        - The individual's needs can be clearly defined by the comprehensive speech-language pathologist's evaluation in which case a trial period is not necessary.
    - Replacement with **1 or more** of the following:
        - Out of Warranty repair due to normal wear and tear
        - Device not broken due to neglect
        - Unable to be repaired
- Individual has severe expressive speech impairment and alternative natural communication methods such as writing or sign language are not conducive or are inadequate for that individual's daily functional communication needs (ability to direct behavior of caregivers, report medical status and complaints, participate in decision making)

- Individual has tested the device, has demonstrated 50% or higher success rate (measurable) and ability to make request/ needs known without prompting or assistance by SLP
- Individual and caregiver demonstrate motivation to learn and use the device, as evidenced by participation in therapies, Head Start or other age appropriate learning

Augmentative speech devices and/or voice prosthesis are considered **not medically necessary** for any indication for any use other than those indicated in clinical criteria, to include but not limited to:

- MyGuide is a software application for a personal mobile device used for organizational and progress monitoring needs used mostly by caregivers and teachers (families, professionals, schools, and facilities.)
- Reading programs such as Fast ForWord
- More than one item of durable medical equipment for the same or similar purpose
- Multi-lingual modules unless the primary caretaker speaks a language other than English
- An alternative input device if the member is able to use a standard input device

Document History:

Revised Dates:

- 2026: March – Implementation date of July 1, 2026. Annual review completed, criteria and coding removed to align with authorization changes.
- 2025: March – criteria updated references updated
- 2025: February – Annual review completed, criteria updated to include voice prosthesis.
- 2025: January – Procedure coding updated to align with changes in service authorization status.
- 2024: August – criteria updated references updated
- 2022: August
- 2021: April, November
- 2020: October
- 2019: September, November
- 2016: March
- 2015: March, July
- 2014: March
- 2013: November
- 2012: October
- 2011: October (changed from Medical 138)

Reviewed Dates:

- 2023: August
- 2022: October
- 2018: August
- 2017: November
- 2013: October
- 2010: October
- 2009: October

Origination Date: November 2008

Coding:

Medically necessary with criteria:

Coding	Description
E1399	Durable medical equipment, miscellaneous
E1905	Communication board, nonelectronic augmentative or alternative communication device

E2500	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using prerecorded messages, less than or equal to eight minutes recording time
E2502	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using prerecorded messages, greater than 8 minutes but less than or equal to 20 minutes recording time
E2504	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using prerecorded messages, greater than 20 minutes but less than or equal to 40 minutes recording time
E2506	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using prerecorded 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
E2599	Accessory for speech generating device, not otherwise classified
E3000	Speech volume modulation system, any type, including all components and accessories

Considered Not Medically Necessary:

Coding	Description
	None

The preceding codes are included above for informational purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Additionally, inclusion or exclusion of a treatment, procedure, or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

Special Notes: *

- Coverage: See the appropriate benefit document for specific coverage determination. Member specific benefits take precedence over medical policy.
    - Ocular, optical, eye tracking, gaze interaction and electromyographic sensor accessories for speech devices may be covered if recommended by speech pathologist or occupational therapist when medical necessity criteria is met for a speech generating device and individual has medical condition that impedes the use of the device without ocular, optical, or eye tracking.
    - Replacements and upgrades are allowed every 36 months or if device is completely nonfunctional.
    - Request for specific communication software for dedicated digitized or synthesized speech that enables a laptop computer, desktop computer, or personal digital assistant (PDA), tablet to function as a speech generating device and program insulation and technical support are reimbursable
    - Additional reimbursement heavy duty case, care plus extended warrantee to 36 months, additional software and required accessories for a laptop computer, desktop computer, or personal digital assistant (PDA).
- Application to Products: Policy is applicable to Sentara Health Plan Commercial products.
- Authorization Requirements: Pre-certification by the Plan is required.
- Special Notes:
    - Commercial
        - Medical policies can be highly technical and complex and are provided here for informational purposes. These medical policies are intended for use by health care professionals. The medical policies do not constitute medical advice or medical care. Treating health care professionals are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment, and medical advice. Sentara Health Plan members should discuss the information in the medical policies with their treating health care professionals. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and these medical policies are subject to change

without notice, although Sentara Health Plan will notify providers as required in advance of changes that could have a negative impact on benefits.

- Services mean both medical and behavioral health (mental health) services and supplies unless We specifically tell You otherwise. We do not cover any services that are not listed in the Covered Services section unless required to be covered under state or federal laws and regulations. We do not cover any services that are not Medically Necessary. We sometimes give examples of specific services that are not covered but that does not mean that other similar services are covered. Some services are covered only if We authorize them. When We say You or Your We mean You and any of Your family members covered under the Plan. Call Member Services if You have questions.

References:

Including but not limited to: Specialty Association Guidelines; Government Regulations; Winifred S. Hayes, Inc; UpToDate; Literature Review; Specialty Advisors; National Coverage Determination (NCD); Local Coverage Determination (LCD).

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Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies - Chapter IV: Covered Services and Limitations. (2025, Dec 05). Retrieved Feb 20, 2026, from Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services: https://vamedicaid.dmas.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/2025-12/DME%20Chapter%20IV%20%28updated%2012.5.25%29_Final.pdf

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NCD: Speech Generating Devices. (2015, Jul 29). Retrieved Feb 20, 2026, from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services: https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/ncd.aspx?ncdid=274&ncdver=2&keyword=Speech%20Generating&keywordType=starts&areaId=s53&docType=NCA,CAL,NCD,MEDCAC,TA,MCD,6,3,5,1,F,P&contractOption=all&sortBy=relevance&bc=1

Title 21 Food and Drugs. (2026, Feb 19). Retrieved Feb 25, 2026, from U.S. Food and Drug Administration: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21

Keywords:

SHP Augmentative Speech Device, SHP Durable Medical Equipment 30,keyboard, iPad, screen, mouse, computer, speech pathologist, functional limitation, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, auditory, expressive speech impairment, alternative natural communication, sign language, Synthesized speech devices, degenerative disease, speech impairment, Speech-Generating Devices, communication aids, voice output communication aids (VOCAs), Speech Enhancer SGD, DynaMyte, DragonDictate, VitalVoice, Dialo, Eyegaze, Alternative communication device, AAC, speech-generating device, SGD, Devices with Digitized or Synthesized Speech Output and Ocular, optical, or eye tracking speech devices, BIGmack®, Cheap Talk 8 6-levels Communicator, GoTalk™ Series, Hip Talker, iTalk2™ Communication Aid, Little Mack®, One by Four Talker, Partner/One™, Partner/Two™, Personal Talker, Sequencer, Step-by-Step™ with Levels Communicator, Talking Brix™ Communicators, TalkTrac™ Plus, TalkTrac™ Plus with Levels, TECH/Plus: 32, TECH/Plus: 32+, Tech/Speak, Tech/Talk, Ultimate 8, VoicePal, VoicePal Max, VoicePal Pro, EasyTalk, Hand Held Voice, MessageMate, SuperTalker™ Progressive Communicator, DynaVox M3, EasyTalk, ET-24, ET-32, Springboard Lite, Talara-32, Tobii ATI s32, Allora, E-talk Tablet, DynaWrite™ 2.0, DynVox T10, DynaVox T15, Freedom 2000, Optimist MMX, Nova Chat 8, Nova Chat 10, Tobii Dynavox T7, Tobii Dynavox T10, Tobii Dynavox T15, Tobii I-12, Tobii I-15, Accent™ 800-M, Accent™ 1000-M, QuickTalker™ Freestyle, QuickTalker™, Freestyle mini, Visual Suite, TapToTalk, AAC, Ablenet's QuickTalker Freestyle, Accent™ 1000-M, Accent™ 800-M, ACD, Allora, Alternative communication device, Augmentative and alternative communication, Beamz Interactive Music System, Big Talk Assistive Technology Communicator, BIGmack®, ChatterVox Voice Amplifier, Cheap Talk 8 6-levels Communicator, Clicker 4, ComLink, Devices with Digitized or Synthesized Speech Output and Ocular, optical, or eye tracking speech devices, Dialo, Dragon Computer Speech Recognition Software, Dragon Speak, DragonDictate, DynaMyte, Dynavox, DynaVox M3, DynaVox T15, DynaWrite™ 2.0, DynVox T10, EasyTalk, ECO-14, Enabling Devices Tactile Symbol Communicator, ET-24, ET-32, E-talk Tablet, E-triloquist, EyeGaze, FAB Frenchay Alphabet Board, Freedom 2000, Freestyle mini, GOTALK 9+, GoTalk Express 32 – Advanced Communication Aid, GoTalk™ Series, Grid 3 for WindowsGoTalk Now, Grid for iPad, Gus pocket communicator, Hand Held Voice, Hip Talk Plus Communicator, Hip Talker, iCommunicate, iCommunicate for iPad, iTalk2™ Communication Aid, LetMeTalk, Lightwriter, Lightwriter SL40, LINK Plus Communication Aid, Little Mack®, Logan ProxTalker Modular AAC Device Package, LogansVoice Communication Bundle, MegaBee Assisted Communication and Writing Tablet, MegaBee Eye Pointing Communication Tablet, MessageMate, Metacom, MyTobii, NextUp Talker, Nova Chat 10, Nova Chat 8, One by Four Talker, Optimist MMX, PalmOne, Partner/One™, Partner/Two™, Personal Talker, Picture exchange communication system] PECS, Pocket Go-Talk 5-Level Communication Device, Predictable text-to-speech app, Pretke Romich, Proloquo2Go, Quick Glance/Eye Gaze System, QuickTalk AAC, QuickTalker™ Freestyle, Rolltalk Maxi Smart, Sequencer, SGD, SofType , SonoFlex, Speech Enhancer SGD, Speech-generating device, Springboard Lite, Step-by-Step™ with Levels Communicator, SuperTalker™ Progressive Communicator, Talara-32, Talk to Me - Text to Speech, Talking Brix™ Communicators, TalkTablet, TalkTrac™ Plus with Levels, TalkTrac™ Plus, TapToTalk, TECH/Plus: 32+, TECH/Plus: 32, Tech/Speak, Tech/Talk, Tobii ATI s32, Tobii Dynavox, Tobii Dynavox app, Tobii Dynavox T10, Tobii Dynavox T15, Tobii Dynavox T7, Tobii I-12, Tobii I-15, Tobii Sono Flex, Toshiba Notebook w/Grid2, TouchChat, TouchChat HD – AAC, TouchChat HD – AAC with WordPower, Ultimate 8, Ultratec Operator Assisted, Visual Suite, VitalVoice, Voice4U, VoicePal Max, VoicePal Pro, VoicePal, Words+ Ez keys, Zygo Pollyanna