

Medical Policy

Speech Generating Devices

Policy Number: 053

	Commercial and Qualified Health Plans	Mass General Brigham Health Plan	Medicare Advantage	OneCare	Senior Care Options (SCO)
Authorization required	X	X	X	X	X
No Prior Authorization					

Overview

The purpose of this document is to describe the guidelines Mass General Brigham Health Plan utilizes to determine the medical necessity for speech generating devices (also referred to as augmentative and alternative communication devices) and its associated software for members with severe expressive communication impairments.

Mass General Brigham Health Plan does not compensate for devices, accessories, or software programs that are not the least intensive level of services.

Coverage Guidelines

Medical necessity for speech generating devices is determined through InterQual® criteria which Mass General Brigham has customized to add the exclusions. To access the criteria, log into Mass General Brigham Health Plan's provider website at MassGeneralBrighamHealthPlan.org and click the InterQual® Criteria Lookup link under the Resources Menu.

Exclusions

1. The requirements for coverage have not been met.
2. The member fails to demonstrate during the training schedule or at any subsequent time the ability to learn to use the device or software functionally for communication.
3. The member demonstrates during the training schedule significant behaviors such as physical aggression or property destruction.
4. Replacements for devices damaged/lost due to neglect.
5. Replacement requests less than three years from receipt of the initial device unless documentation supports irreparable damage that is not a result of property destruction or neglect by the member.
6. Upgrade requests less than three years from receipt of the initial device.
7. Upgrade requests that do not clearly identify functional benefit from existing device.
8. Duplicate devices or software, including accessories for mounting.
9. Charges for web, cellular, or other device connectivity, home modifications, and technical support.
10. Voice amplifiers for members with speech volume or intelligibility due to vocal strain.

11. Tracheoesophageal voice prostheses.
12. Altered auditory feedback devices for the treatment of stuttering.

Medicare Variation

Mass General Brigham Health Plan uses guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for medical necessity determinations for its Medicare Advantage plan members. National Coverage Determinations (NCDs), Local Coverage Determinations (LCDs), Local Coverage Articles (LCAs), and documentation included in the Medicare manuals are the basis for medical necessity determinations. When there is no guidance from CMS for the requested service, Mass General Brigham Health Plan's medical policies are used for medical necessity determinations. **At the time of Mass General Brigham Health Plan's most recent policy review, Medicare has the following documentation:**

1. [NCD - Speech Generating Devices \(50.1\)](#)
2. [LCD - Speech Generating Devices \(SGD\) \(L33739\)](#)
3. [Article - Speech Generating Devices \(SGD\) - Policy Article \(A52469\)](#)

MassHealth Variation

Mass General Brigham Health Plan uses guidance from MassHealth for medical necessity determinations for its Mass General Brigham ACO members. When there is no guidance from MassHealth for the requested service, Mass General Brigham Health Plan's medical policies are used for medical necessity determinations. **At the time of Mass General Brigham Health Plan's most recent policy review, MassHealth had:**

- [Guidelines for Medical Necessity Determination for Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices, Including Speech-Generating Devices.](#)

OneCare and SCO Variation

Mass General Brigham Health Plan uses guidance from CMS for medical necessity determinations for its OneCare and SCO plan members. NCDs, LCDs, LCAs, and documentation included in the Medicare manuals are the basis for medical necessity determinations. When there is no guidance from CMS for the requested service, Mass General Brigham Health Plan uses medical necessity guidelines from MassHealth. When there is no guidance from CMS or from MassHealth, Mass General Brigham Health Plan's medical policies are used for medical necessity determinations.

Definitions

Speech Generating Device (SGD): Speech generating devices are defined as durable medical equipment that provides an individual who has severe speech impairment with the ability to meet his or her functional, speaking needs. SGDs are speech aids consisting of devices or software that generate speech and are used solely by the individual who has severe speech impairment.

Speech Generating Software: Software that enables a desk or laptop computer, a tablet, or personal digital assistant (PDA) to function as an SGD.

Codes

The following codes are included below for informational purposes only; inclusion of a code does not constitute or imply coverage.

Authorized CPT/HCPCS Codes	Code Description
E1399	iPads and tablets configured as speech generating devices (MassHealth members only)



E2500	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using prerecorded messages, less than or equal to 8 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
E2599	Accessory for speech generating device, not otherwise classified

Effective

January 2026: Ad hoc update. Updated prior authorization table and added variation for OneCare and SCO members. Added info on customized IQ subset. Clarified MassHealth Variation.

September 2025: Annual update. Updated criteria to reflect use of InterQual®. Added NCD. Resumed PA requirement.

October 2024: Ad hoc update. Added MassHealth Variation.

September 2024: Annual update. Removed prior authorization requirements for all lines of business.

July 2023: Annual update. Medicare Advantage added to table. Medicare Variation language added. References updated.

July 2022: Annual update. References updated.

July 2021: Annual update. References updated.

July 2020: Annual update. Codes update. References updated.

July 2019: Annual update. Updated references.

September 2018: Annual update. Revised code E1399 to indicate if criteria are met, the code applies for MassHealth members only.

December 2017: Effective Date.

References

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MassHealth Provider Manual Series 130 CMR 409.000: Durable Medical Equipment Manual.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Speech-Language Pathology Medical Review Guidelines

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Basic Information About Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Rockville: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; 2015. Available from: <http://www.asha.org/NJC/faqs-aac-basics.htm>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Available at: https://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589942773§ion=Key_Issues



Dada S, Flores C, Bastable K, Schlosser RW. The effects of augmentative and alternative communication interventions on the receptive language skills of children with developmental disabilities: A scoping review. *Int J Speech Lang Pathol*. 2021 Jun;23(3):247-257. doi: 10.1080/17549507.2020.1797165. Epub 2020 Sep 7. PMID: 32893695.

Drager K, Reichle J, Pinkoski C. Synthesized Speech Output and Children: A scoping review. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 2010:259-273. doi:10.1044/1058-0360(2010/09-0024)

Gevarter C, O'Reilly MF, Kuhn M, et al. Increasing the vocalizations of individuals with autism during intervention with a speech-generating device. *J Appl Behav Anal*. 2016;49(1):17-33

Gilroy SP, Leader G, McCleery JP. A pilot community-based randomized comparison of speech generating devices and the picture exchange communication system for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism Res*. 2018;11(12):1701-1711.

Hajjar DJ, McCarthy JW. Individuals Who Use Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Participate in Active Recreation: Perspectives From Adults With Developmental Disabilities and Acquired Conditions. *Am J Speech Lang Pathol*. 2022 Jan 18;31(1):375-389. doi: 10.1044/2021_AJSLP-21-00179. Epub 2022 Jan 4. PMID: 34982946.

Judge S, Murray J, Lynch Y, et al. Attributes of communication aids as described by those supporting children and young people with AAC. *Int J Lang Commun Disord*. 2023 May;58(3):910-928. doi: 10.1111/1460-6984.12833. Epub 2022 Dec 24. PMID: 36565242.

Lorah E, Parnell A, Whitby P, et al. A Systematic Review of Tablet Computers and Portable Media Players as Speech Generating Devices for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *J of Autism Dev Disorder* 2015;45(12):3792-804

MassHealth Guidelines for Medical Necessity Determination for Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices. March 2023

Noridian Healthcare Solutions, LLC. Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Speech Generating Devices (SGD) (L33739). Revision Effective Date: N/A. Available: <https://med.noridianmedicare.com/web/jddme/policies/lcd/active>

National Government Services. Local Coverage Article. Speech Generating Devices (SGD) (A52469). Revision Date: 01/01/2020 Available: [Medical Policies - NGS MEDICARE](#)

Ripat J, Verdonck M, Gacek C, McNicol S. A qualitative metasynthesis of the meaning of speech-generating devices for people with complex communication needs. *Augment Altern Commun*. 2018 Sep 19:1-11.

Schlosser R, Wendt O. Effects of Augmentative and Alternative Communication Intervention on Speech Production in children with autism: A systematic review. *American Journal of Speech- Language Pathology* 2008;17:212-230. doi:10.1044/1058-0360(2008/021)

Tullis CA, Marya V, Alice Shillingsburg M. Enhancing Instruction via Instructive Feedback for a Child With Autism Using a Speech-Generating Device. *Anal Verbal Behav*. 2018;35(1):103-112. Published 2018 Jun 25. doi:10.1007/s40616-018-0096-z

White EN, Ayres KM, Snyder SK, Cagliani RR, Ledford JR. Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Speech Production for Individuals with ASD: A Systematic Review. *J Autism Dev Disord*. 2021 Nov;51(11):4199-4212. doi: 10.1007/s10803-021-04868-2. Epub 2021 Jan 28. PMID: 33511525.



Wilkinson KM, O'Neill Zimmerman T, Light J. Visual Attention to Cued Targets in Simulated Aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication Displays for Individuals With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. *J Speech Lang Hear Res*. 2021 May 11;64(5):1726-1738. doi: 10.1044/2021_JSLHR-20-00451. Epub 2021 May 5. PMID: 33950703; PMCID: PMC8608184.

