

The “Truth” About Funding Augmentative Communication Devices

March 10, 2010: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (\$84 Members /\$99 non-Members)

This is an expanded version of the workshop offered in December to accommodate more detail and discussion.

Target Audience

This workshop is targeted to speech language pathologists, school-based assistive technology directors and their teams, third party billing coordinators, service coordinators, transition teams, and families supporting a member in need of or using a Speech Generating Device (SGD) (also known as an Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) device).

Description of Experience

Funding AAC devices is a process, but it doesn't have to be a complicated one. Learning how to navigate “the system” is imperative for successful device acquisition. There are many interpretations of the laws depending on whom or which organization is contacted; and lack of knowledge, inconsistencies, and incorrect information among the funding agencies themselves causes frustration, delays or, more often than not, outright denials to funding requests. For example, while IDEA “can” be a funding source for communication devices for students:

- IDEA money is not the only funding alternative available for schools;
- students are able to own their devices outright;
- school-based speech therapists can write letters of “medical necessity” and submit to the manufacturer/provider for approval.

For adults needing AAC/SGD's, Medicare is also a source of funding for evaluations and the device. The laws, policies, and procedures governing purchases through Medicare will be discussed as well.

Participants will obtain both detailed information on successful letter writing as well as the appropriate submission process. Acceptable and questionable letters of recommendation will be presented in order to heighten attendees' awareness of crucial mistakes. This workshop will introduce speech-language pathologists to the process and benefits of using insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare to acquire AAC devices. Some of the topics to be covered will be:

- Legal definition of Assistive Technology
- Medical definition of AAC/SGD
- IDEA, FAPE and AAC/SGDs
- Medical justification for these devices
- Maryland Medicaid requirements/restrictions under COMAR
- Co-existence of IEP team recommendations and private evaluations
- “funding packets” offered online by many device manufacturers to assist in letter writing
- Federal (Medicare) requirements to assist attendees in the understanding of what the state guidelines are based on.

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Months of research and invaluable assistance from the National Association of School Boards, the Maryland Disability Law Center, Lew Golinker, Esq., A.S.H.A., Roni Russell, M.Ed., of Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PATTAN), local education agencies, and private clinicians has allowed the presenter to provide the most current and accurate information regarding AAC/SGD funding.

Learning Objectives

- Identify an occasion when a student would benefit from AAC ownership vs. school ownership.
- Learn the appropriate way to approach families with the “opportunity” of AAC ownership.
- Learn about the federal and state laws which encompass the funding of AAC/SGD’s.
- Discuss the strategies of writing letters of medical necessity to AAC manufacturers which will include learning the appropriate medical terminology and framework for greater approval rate.

Presented by Diana Jurist