Speech Generating Devices

Description

Speech generating devices (SGDs) are speech aids that provide individuals with severe speech impairment the ability to meet their functional speaking needs.

Policy

Speech generating devices are considered medically necessary for Members that do not have the ability to speak and meet coverage criteria.

Policy Guidelines

Coverage Criteria:

1. Must be ordered by the Member’s treating physician.
2. A speech generating device (E2500- E2511) covered when all of the following criteria (a-g) are met:
   a. Prior to the delivery of the SGD, the Member 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:
      i. Current communication impairment, including the type, severity, language skills, cognitive ability, and anticipated course of the impairment;
      ii. An assessment of whether the Member's daily communication needs could be met using other natural modes of communication;
      iii. A description of the functional communication goals expected to be achieved and treatment options;
      iv. Rationale for selection of a specific device and any accessories;
      v. Demonstration that the Member possesses a treatment plan that includes a training schedule for the selected device;
      vi. The cognitive and physical abilities to effectively use the selected device and any accessories to communicate;
      vii. For a subsequent upgrade to a previously issued SGD, information regarding the functional benefit to the Member of the upgrade compared to the initially provided SGD; and,
b. The Member's medical condition is one resulting in a severe expressive speech impairment; and,
c. The Member's speaking needs cannot be met using natural communication methods; and,
d. Other forms of treatment have been considered and ruled out; and,
e. The Member's speech impairment will benefit from the device ordered; and,
f. A copy of the SLP's written evaluation and recommendation have been forwarded to the Member's treating physician prior to ordering the device; and,
g. The SLP performing the Member evaluation may not be an employee of or have a financial relationship with the provider of the SGD.

Limitations:

1. If one or more of the SGD coverage criteria 2a-g is not met, the SGD will be denied as not medically necessary.
2. Codes E2500- E2511 perform the same essential function - speech generation. Therefore, claims for more than one SGD will be denied as not medically necessary.
3. Accessories (E2599) for E2500- E2510 are covered if the basic coverage criteria (a-g) for the base device are met and the medical necessity for each accessory is clearly documented in the formal evaluation by the SLP.
4. Repair of a SGD is limited to restoration of a serviceable condition which is not the result from misuse, non-intentional or intentional.
5. Prior to the purchase of a SGD, the Member must undergo a 3-month trial rental of the device, with an evaluation by a SLP to determine the appropriateness of continued use of the device.

Exclusions:

1. Laptop computers, desktop computers, PDAs or other devices that are not dedicated SGDs are not covered as they are not used primarily for medical purposes.
2. Installation and/or technical support of the software that enables a laptop computer, desktop computer, or PDA to function as an SGD is not covered when billed separately.

HCPCS Level II Codes and Description

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

E2599 ACCESSORY FOR SPEECH GENERATING DEVICE, NOT OTHERWISE CLASSIFIED

Documentation Requirements

1. When codes E2511- E2599 are billed, the claim must include a narrative description of the item, the manufacturer, and the product name/number. If billing a multi-component mounting system (E2512), list each manufacturer and product name/number.

Coding Guidelines

1. Digitized speech (E2500, E2502 - E2506), sometimes referred to as devices with "whole message" speech output, utilize words or phrases that have been recorded by an individual other than the SGD user for playback upon command of the SGD user.

2. Synthesized speech (E2508, E2510), unlike the pre-recorded messages of digitized speech, is a technology that translates a user's input into device-generated speech. Users of synthesized speech SGDs are not limited to pre-recorded messages but rather can independently create messages as their communication needs dictate.

3. E2508 devices require that the user make physical contact with a keyboard, touch screen or other display containing letters.

4. E2510 devices permit the user multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access. Multiple methods of message formulation must include the capability for message selection by two or more of the following methods: letters, words, pictures or symbols.
Multiple methods of access must include the capability to access the device by two or more of the following: direct physical contact with a keyboard or touch screen, indirect selection techniques with a specialized access device such as a joystick, head mouse, optical head pointer, switch, light pointer, infrared pointer, scanning device, or Morse Code.

5. Devices that have the capability to generate both digitized and synthesized speech are coded as E2508 or E2510, depending on the method of synthesized speech formulation and device access.

6. Codes E2500, E2502-E2506, E2508 and E2510 include all applicable software programs (whether they are on the device when shipped by the manufacturer or added by the supplier prior to delivery), batteries, battery chargers and AC adapters. These items may not be billed separately. There is also no separate payment if a nonintegrated keyboard is provided with an SGD.

7. Code 2511 is used to code for a speech generating software program that enables a laptop computer, desktop computer or PDA to function as an SGD. (Within this policy, the term SGD also describes these speech generating software programs.) The allowance for code E2511 includes the speech generating software program only. Installation of the program or technical support must not be billed separately. Code E2511 must not be used to code for software programs that are installed at the time of delivery of an SGD that is billed with codes E2500, E2502-E2506, E2508 or E2510. Code E2511 must not be used to code for software programs installed at the time of the initial provision of an SGD access device (E2599). E2511 is used for upgrade programs for a computer or PDA that are provided after the initial provision of the software.

8. Mounting systems (E2512) are accessories that are needed to place the SGD, switches or other access devices within the reach of the member. For systems with multiple components, bill system on a single claim line with one (1) unit of service.

9. Code E2599 is used for other separately payable accessories for speech generating devices. Examples include:
   - An access device that enables the selection of letters, words or symbols via direct or indirect selection techniques. Access devices include, but are not limited to, optical head pointers, joysticks, switches and scanning devices. However, there is no separate billing for any software, interfaces, cables, adapters, interconnects or switches necessary for the access device to interface with the SGD. Those components should be included in the charge for the access device itself.
   - Replacement accessories such as batteries, battery chargers and AC adapters.
   - Upgrade software programs for E2500, E2502-E2506, E2508 or E2510 devices that are provided after the initial provision of the SGD.
• Electronic components that allow the SGD to be operated by the drive control interface of a power wheelchair.

10. Code E2511 is used to code for a speech generating software program that enables a laptop computer, desktop computer or personal digital assistant (PDA) to function as an SGD. The allowance for code E2511 includes the speech generating software program only. Installation of the program or technical support must not be billed separately. Code E2511 must not be used to code software included with the initial provision of the SGD (E2500, E2508, E2510, E2502 - E2506) since the software cost is included in the reimbursement for those SGD codes. In addition, code E2511 must not be used to code software included with the initial provision of the access device (E2599) since the software cost is included in the reimbursement for the access device.

11. Upgrades to E2511 are subsequent versions of a speech generating software program that may include enhanced features or other improvements. Upgrades to E2511 must be coded E2511.

12. Mounting systems necessary to place the SGD device, switches and other access devices within the reach of the Member must be coded E2512.

13. Accessories to SGDs such as access devices should be coded E2599. There should be no separate billing of any software, interfaces, cables, adapters, interconnects, or switches necessary for the accessory to interface with the SGD (E2500, E2508 - E2511, E2502 - E2506).

14. Upgrades to E2500, E2508, E2510, and E2502 - E2506 are subsequent versions of the device's software program or memory modules that may include enhanced features or other improvements. Upgrades to E2500, E2508, E2510, and E2502 - E2506 must be coded E2599.

⚠️ Important Note:

Northwood’s Medical Policies are developed to assist Northwood in administering plan benefits and determining whether a particular DMEPOS product or service is reasonable and necessary. Equipment that is used primarily and customarily for a non-medical purpose is not considered durable medical equipment.

Coverage determinations are made on a case-by-case basis and are subject to all of the terms, conditions, limitations, and exclusions of the member’s contract including medical necessity requirements.

The conclusion that a DMEPOS product or service is reasonable and necessary does not constitute coverage. The member’s contract defines which DMEPOS product or service is covered, excluded or limited. The policies provide for clearly written, reasonable and current criteria that have been approved by Northwood’s Medical Director.
The clinical criteria and medical policies provide guidelines for determining the medical necessity for specific DMEPOS products or services. In all cases, final benefit determinations are based on the applicable contract language. To the extent there are any conflicts between medical policy guidelines and applicable contract language, the contract language prevails. Medical policy is not intended to override the policy that defines the member’s benefits, nor is it intended to dictate to providers how to direct care. Northwood Medical policies shall not be interpreted to limit the benefits afforded to Medicare or Medicaid members by law and regulation and Northwood will use the applicable state requirements to determine required quantity limit guidelines.

Northwood’s policies do not constitute medical advice. Northwood does not provide or recommend treatment to members. Members should consult with their treating physician in connection with diagnosis and treatment decisions.

**References**

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medicare Coverage Database, National Coverage Documents; November 2011.


**Applicable URAC Standard**

| Core 8 | Staff operational tools and support |

**Change/Authorization History**

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<th>Revision Number</th>
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<td>Initial Release</td>
<td>Rosanne Brugnoni</td>
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