

## Speech Generating Devices

Policy Number: PG0135  
Last Review: 07/01/2021

HMO AND PPO  
ELITE (MEDICARE ADVANTAGE)  
MARKETPLACE

### GUIDELINES:

- This policy does not certify benefits or authorization of benefits, which is designated by each individual policyholder terms, conditions, exclusions, and limitations contract. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee regarding coverage or reimbursement/payment. Self-Insured group specific policy will supersede this general policy when group supplementary plan document or individual plan decision directs otherwise.
- Paramount applies coding edits to all medical claims through coding logic software to evaluate the accuracy and adherence to accepted national standards.
- This medical policy is solely for guiding medical necessity and explaining correct procedure reporting used to assist in making coverage decisions and administering benefits.
- Durable Medical Equipment (DME) frequency limitations are calculated based on The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) criteria and guidelines, National Coverage Determinations (NCD), and Local Coverage Determinations (LCD) rules and regulations

### SCOPE:

☒ Professional  
☐ Facility

### DESCRIPTION:

Speech generating devices (SGD) are speech aids to provide individuals with severe speech impairment the ability to meet their functional communication needs. Etiologies of speech impairment in children may include cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism-like disorders, and other genetic or speech disorders. Etiologies in adults may include stroke, traumatic brain injury, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson's disease, and head and neck cancers among others. There may be associated functional disabilities that also limit the individual's ability to use alternative natural methods of communication such as writing notes, using sign language, or even to manipulate a low-tech augmentative communication system.

A speech evaluation is performed in order to determine the severity and motor deficit of each individual. This evaluation is conducted by a speech-language pathologist (SLP). The SLP is a licensed health professional, educated at the graduate level in the study of human communication, its development and its disorders. The SLP must hold a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) in speech-language pathology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The SLP will be able to determine, based on the evaluation and on the natural course of the disease or condition, when a speech generating device or treatment is necessary and what type of device or treatment would best meet the needs of the specific patient in question.

Speech generating devices are speech aids consisting of devices or software that generate speech and are used solely by the individual who has a severe speech impairment. The speech is generated using one of the following methods:

- Digitized audible/verbal speech output, using prerecorded messages;
- Synthesized audible/verbal speech output, which requires message formulation by spelling and device access by physical contact with the device-direct selection techniques;
- Synthesized audible/verbal speech output which permits multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access; or
- Software that allows a computer or other electronic device to generate audible/verbal speech.

Speech Generating Devices are characterized by the following:

PG0-02/16/2024

- Are of use only by an individual who has severe speech impairment
- May have digitized speech output, using pre-recorded messages, less than or equal to 8 minutes recording time
- May have digitized speech output, using pre-recorded messages, greater than 8 minutes recording time
- May have synthesized speech output, which requires message formulation by spelling and device access by physical contact with the device-direct selection techniques
- May be software that allows a laptop computer, desktop computer or personal digital assistant (PDA) to function as a Speech Generating Device
- May have synthesized speech output, which permits multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access

Speech Generating Devices are not:

- Devices that are capable of running software for purposes other than for speech generation, e.g., devices that can also run a word processing package, an accounting program, or perform other non-medical function
- Laptop computers, desktop computers, or PDAs which may be programmed to perform the same function as a Speech Generating Device
- Useful to someone without severe speech impairment

#### **POLICY:**

##### **Paramount Commercial Insurance Plans and Elite (Medicare Advantage) Plans**

**Speech generating devices (E2500, E2502, E2504, E2506, E2508, E2510, E2511, E2512, and E2599) require prior authorization.**

**Communication aids (E1902- communication board, non-electric augmentative or alternative communication device) are non-covered.**

#### **COVERAGE CRITERIA:**

##### **Paramount Commercial Insurance Plans and Elite (Medicare Advantage) Plans**

Paramount will cover speech-generating devices (SGDs) for member when ALL the following criteria are met:

1. Before the delivery of the SGD, the member must have a documented face-to-face evaluation of his or her communication abilities by a SLP. The SLP performing the member evaluation may not be an employee or have a financial relationship with the supplier of the SGD.
2. The formal, written evaluation must include ALL of the following elements:
  - Current communication impairment, including the type, severity, language skills, and anticipated course of the impairment
  - An assessment of whether the member's daily communication needs could be met using other natural or aided modes of communication; treatments have been considered and ruled out.
  - Clinical documentation supporting the assessment that the member possesses the linguistic capability to formulate a message independently
  - Clinical documentation supporting the assessment that the member possesses cognitive and physical abilities to effectively use the selected device and any accessories to communicate
  - A description of the functional communication goals expected to be achieved and treatment options
  - Rationale for selection of a specific device and any accessories
  - Demonstration that the member possesses a comprehensive treatment plan that includes a training schedule for the selected device
  - For any subsequent upgrade to a previously issued SGD, information regarding the functional benefit to the member of the upgrade compared to the initially provided SGD to include a full device description of the most current SGD being requested
  - A full disclosure of any SGD equipment that the member already possesses to include a statement as to why the current equipment does not currently meet the member's needs which is supported by clinical documentation from the member's medical record

- Documentation supporting the medical necessity of any accessory or add-on equipment, supplies or SGD features being requested
  - The evaluation must be signed and dated by all parties of the member's evaluation team to include professional licensure numbers
  - The member's medical condition is one resulting in a permanent severe expressive speech impairment that is supported by documentation in the member's medical record, including, but not limited to, anarthria, aphasia, aphonia, apraxia or dysarthria
  - The member's speaking needs cannot be met using natural communication methods
  - Other forms of speech impairment treatment have been considered and ruled out
  - The member's speech impairment and communication ability will benefit clinically from the device ordered
3. A copy of the SLP's written evaluation and recommendation must be forwarded to the member's treating prescriber before the device is ordered and kept in the member's medical records.
  4. Mounting brackets used in association with the installation of the SGD to a member's wheelchair can be billed for separate reimbursement using the appropriate billing codes for these devices.
    - As long as the speech-generating device is limited to use by a person with a severe speech impairment and is primarily used for the purpose of generating speech, it is not necessary for a speech-generating device to be dedicated only to speech generation to be considered DME.
    - A laptop or desktop computer, iPad, Tablet or other device with Guided Access (which limits the use of the device to communication applications to enable the device to function as a dedicated SGD), is considered medically necessary when ALL of the above criteria (1-4) are met.
    - Desktop computers, laptop computers, pagers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), portable multi-media players (e.g., iPod), smart phones, and tablet devices (e.g., Galaxy, iPads, Kindle), or other devices that are not dedicated SGDs are not covered because they do not meet the definition of DME because they are useful in the absence of illness and injury. Please check benefit plan descriptions for details.

Alternative input devices are covered when a beneficiary is unable to use standard input devices. Claims for alternative input devices for members who are able to use standard input devices will be denied as not reasonable and necessary.

#### EYE CONTROL SGD ACCESSORY, E2599

1. Eye control technology for an SGD must only be considered as a last choice after all other methods of operating the SGD device have been evaluated and determined by the evaluating SLP not to meet the member's needs.
2. The SLP must document on the prior authorization form and in the member's medical record that alternative SGD control devices other than eye control were evaluated before requesting eye control technology for a specific SGD device.
3. The member must have a specific documented medical necessity that supports the request for an eye control SGD accessory including but not limited to the following:
  - Member has a documented history of a brainstem stroke
  - Member has Guillain Barre syndrome
  - Member is in the final stages of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
  - Member has a documented occurrence of a severe traumatic brain injury that resulted in the complete loss of head movement
4. In order for a request for an eye control SGD accessory to be considered the provider must document that the member is able to use an eye control SGD accessory independently and successfully in the environments and situations in which the member is using the SGD device.
5. The member must be provided with the most cost-effective SGD available to meet the medical needs of the member.
6. The member must be provided with the most cost-effective SGD available to meet the medical needs of the member.

#### NON-COVERED

1. The requirements for coverage as indicated above have not been met.

2. The member 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. Duplicate SGD or software, per qualifying member will be denied as not medically necessary.
4. Environmental control devices are not separately reimbursable.
5. Any non-medical software, accessory, application or hardware to include internet capabilities used in conjunction or compatible with the SGD are not separately reimbursable without prior authorization.
6. Additional accessories to DME items or devices, which are primarily for the comfort or convenience of the member.
7. Personal computers and related hardware are not reimbursable unless the system has been adapted for use primarily as an SGD. The documentation supporting this adaptation must be maintained in the provider's records and on the prior authorization form.
8. There will be no separate billing of any interfaces, printers, printer paper, cables, adapters, interconnects, or any other standard component necessary for the accessory to interface with any SGD in conjunction with the initial dispensing of this equipment to the member that is non-medical in nature without Paramount's prior authorization.
9. A carrying case (including shoulder strap or carrying handle, any type) (E2599) is a convenience item and is denied as non-covered.
10. Accessories used with non-covered devices will be denied as non-covered.
11. Upgrades to speech generating devices and/or software programs that are provided within the 5-year useful lifetime of the device will be denied as statutorily non-covered.
12. Internet service provider (ISP), phone service subscriptions or any modification to a member's home to allow use of the speech generating device are not covered because such services or modifications could be used for non-medical equipment such as standard phones or personal computers.
13. Communication aids that are not speech generating devices (e.g., communication boards) do not meet the definition of DME. Therefore, they are benefit denials. In addition, services related to non-speech generating devices are also not covered.

#### REPAIR, UPGRADE AND REPLACEMENT

1. Reimbursement for repairs is available for no more than one SGD per recipient. Repair costs for an SGD not originally covered by Paramount are to be considered on a case-by-case basis and are approved with a prior authorization. Repairs to member-owned SGD equipment that meet or exceed one thousand dollars in a twelve-month period will be deemed to extend the useful life of the member-owned SGD by one year from the date of the last repair request. No follow-up requests for a new SGD device in association or in conjunction with a repair request will be considered for a member during this extension period.
2. The repair of an SGD (including battery pack replacement) requires prior authorization. Documentation, including the appropriate reimbursement codes, must be submitted when requesting prior authorization.
3. Replacement or modification of a member-owned SGD that was originally covered by Paramount will be authorized only if it is determined by Paramount that the current SGD does not meet the member's basic communication needs, regardless of the age of the current equipment, and the current SGD cannot be repaired or modified to meet basic communication needs due to situations such as a change in a member's cognitive, communication or physical status. If the current SGD can be modified or repaired, replacement will only be considered when modification or repair of the current equipment is more costly than replacement. In addition, a description, model number, and the condition of a member's current equipment must be specified on the documentation submitted for prior authorization of additional or replacement equipment.

#### CODING GUIDELINES

- Digitized speech (E2500, E2502, E2504, 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.
- 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.
- E2508 devices require that the user make physical contact with a keyboard, touch screen or other display

containing letters.

- 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.
- 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.
- Codes E2500, E2502, E2504, E2506, E2508 and E2510 include all applicable speech generating 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.
- To be coded as E2510, a desktop, tablet, smartphone or modified laptop computer must only be capable of speech generation, as defined above. General computing devices (i.e., desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone or other hand-held computers) with additional non-covered features (see Non-Medical Necessity Coverage and Payment Rules above) included at the time of initial issue must be coded A9270.
- A device that provides the same functionality as a desktop, tablet, smartphone or laptop computer at the time of issuance is considered a general use computer and is not considered a speech-generating device.
- Code E2511 is used to code for speech generating software programs that enable a laptop computer, desktop computer, tablet, smartphone or other hand-held general computing device to generate speech. 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 (codes E2500, E2502, E2504, 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 accessory or alternative access device. Software for the accessory or alternative access device is included in the reimbursement for the accessory or alternative access device. Claims for code E2511 billed with an accessory or alternative access device will be denied as unbundling.
- E2511 is used for upgrade programs for SGDs (codes E2500, E2502, E2504, E2506, E2508 or E2510) or when code E2511 is used to bill for software only when installed on a general computing device. Replacement or upgrade of speech generating software loaded onto a covered speech-generating device is not covered unless the replacement software is necessary due to a change in the patient's condition, or in cases where the software has been lost, stolen, irreparably damaged, or has been in continuous use for the reasonable useful lifetime of 5 years.
- Mounting systems and stands (E2512) are accessories that are needed to place the SGD, switches or other access devices within the reach of the beneficiary. For systems with multiple components, bill system on a single claim line with one (1) unit of service. 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 are included in the reimbursement for the access device itself.
- A protective case or cover, any type (E2599) is not separately payable as they are required to make the SGD durable under the definition of DME. Claims for protective cases or covers when billed with a covered SGD will be denied as unbundled.
- Code E2599 is used for other accessories for speech generating devices, may not be separately payable, Examples include:
  - Ocular tracking device, any type, describes an SGD accessory used with an SGD or SGD software to allow a speech-impaired person to use his or her eyes to communicate. Ocular tracking devices track the user's eye movement and determine where on screen their gaze is targeted.
  - Head control mouse, any type, describes an SGD accessory that monitors head movement and translates those movements into actions by the pointer on the SGD screen.

- Alternative input device, any type, describes any accessory other than an ocular tracking device or head control mouse, not integrated into the SGD hardware, used to control the actions of an SGD. Examples of alternative input devices include (not all-inclusive): specialty keyboards, joysticks, trackballs, trackpads, buddy buttons, jelly beans, beamers, roller balls, round pads, pal pads.
- Protective key guard, any type describes an overlay for a keyboard, alternative input device or SGD screen that assists the beneficiary in preventing inadvertent selection of a button, icon or other input.
- Protective case or cover, any type describes any protective case or cover used to enclose the SGD to prevent the ingress of liquids, dirt, dust, etc.
- Carrying case, includes shoulder strap or carrying handle, any type describes any soft-sided or hard-sided carrying container for the SGD and any related accessories (see Non-Covered guidelines above for more information).
- Electronic components that allow the SGD to be operated by the drive control interface of a power wheelchair.

#### **CODING/BILLING INFORMATION:**

**The appearance of a code in this section does not necessarily indicate coverage. Codes that are covered may have selection criteria that must be met. Payment for supplies may be included in payment for other services rendered.**

<b>HCPCS CODES</b>	
<b>E1902</b>	Communication board, non-electric augmentative or alternative communication device
<b>E2500</b>	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, less than or equal to 8 min recording time
<b>E2502</b>	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, less than or equal to 8 min recording time, but less than or equal to 20 min recording time
<b>E2504</b>	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages, greater than 20 min but less than or equal to 40 min recording time
<b>E2506</b>	Speech generating device, digitized speech, using pre-recorded messages greater than 40 min recording time
<b>E2508</b>	Speech generating device, synthesized speech, requiring message formulation by spelling and access by physical contact with the device
<b>E2510</b>	Speech generating device, synthesized speech, permitting multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access
<b>E2511</b>	Speech generating software program, for personal computer or personal digital assistant
<b>E2512</b>	Accessory for speech generating device, mounting system
<b>E2599</b>	Accessory for speech generating device, not otherwise classified

#### **REVISION HISTORY EXPLANATION: ORIGINAL EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/01/2007**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Explanation &amp; Changes</b>
<b>03/01/09</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No update</li> </ul>
<b>7/1/2010</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated references</li> </ul>
<b>09/01/11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes</li> </ul>
<b>12/09/14</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy reviewed and updated to reflect most current clinical evidence per Medical Policy Steering Committee</li> </ul>
<b>07/11/17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria updated per ODM 5160-10-24 for Advantage and CMS A52469 for HMO, PPO, Individual Marketplace, &amp; Elite</li> <li>• Policy reviewed and updated to reflect most current clinical evidence per Medical Policy Steering Committee</li> </ul>
<b>12/15/2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical policy placed on the new Paramount Medical Policy Format</li> </ul>
<b>07/01/2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy reviewed and updated to reflect most current clinical evidence</li> <li>• Removed the documentation statement "Member training expenses related to the operation of the SGD are not separately reimbursable." Adding the statement 'Demonstration that the member possesses a comprehensive treatment plan that includes a training schedule for the selected device.' Allowing for clarification that</li> </ul>

	therapeutic service for the use of speech-generating device, including programming and modification, is separately payable, procedure 92609.
02/08/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Policy updated to reflect Medicaid coverage to Anthem as of 02/01/2023</li> </ul>
03/30/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Policy updated to reflect DME limits calculated by CMS criteria/guidelines.</li> </ul>
02/16/2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Policy placed on the new Paramount Medical Policy format</li> </ul>

**Paramount reserves the right to review and revise our policies periodically when necessary. When there is an update, we will publish the most current policy to <https://www.paramounthealthcare.com/providers/medical-policies/policy-library>**

## REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS Manual System and other CMS publications and services <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals> <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/Internet-Only-Manuals-IOMs>

American Medical Association, *Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®)* and associated publications and services <https://www.ama-assn.org/amaone/cpt-current-procedural-terminology>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System, HCPCS Release and Code Sets <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coding/HCPCSReleaseCodeSets/HCPCS-Quarterly-Update>

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/>  
Industry Standard Review

Hayes, Inc., <https://www.hayesinc.com/>

Industry Standard Review