

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices June 21, 2018

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## General Information

### Q: What are augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices?

AAC devices aid communication for people with severe expressive communication impairment due to developmental and acquired conditions including, but not limited to, cerebral palsy, autism, aphasia, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. This FAQ will focus on non-dedicated devices.

There are two types of AAC devices:

#### 1. Dedicated AAC devices

Dedicated AAC devices are medical devices limited to primarily serve a medical purpose (e.g., solely for the purpose of expressive communication) such that they are generally NOT useful in the absence of disability, illness, or injury. Dedicated AAC devices include tablet-sized medical devices that operate with various speech-generating software and applications. For example: AAC that operate using android or iOS-compatible software.

#### 2. Non-dedicated AAC devices

Non-dedicated devices are nonmedical devices designed for a nonmedical purpose and are generally useful in the absence of disability, illness, or injury; however, they may also include functionality for use as a communication tool. For example: iPads. MassHealth covers non-dedicated devices under certain, limited circumstances.

## Contact Information

**Q:** Whom should providers (SLP or DME providers) contact if they have any questions or concerns?

Providers should contact the MassHealth Prior Authorization Help Line at 1-800-862-8341, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. ET. Providers may also submit questions via email to [support@mashealthtss.com](mailto:support@mashealthtss.com)

**Q:** Whom should parents or caregivers contact if they have any questions?

Parents or caregivers should contact the evaluating speech/ language therapist (SLP) or the enrolled SLP who submitted the prior-authorization (PA) request to MassHealth.

## Coverage For AAC (Dedicated And Non-Dedicated)

**Q:** Who is covered?

1. **MassHealth members must meet MassHealth's PA requirements** set forth in the MassHealth Guidelines for Medical Necessity for AAC. Please refer both to the sections below for highlights of coverage criteria as well as to the *Guidelines for Medical Necessity* for more complete information on PA requirements and coverage: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/mashealth/guidelines/mng-aac.pdf>.
2. A multidisciplinary team must recommend the device or software.
  - The team must include a licensed, certified speech/language pathologist who meets nationally accepted knowledge and skill qualifications for augmentative and alternative communication service delivery.
  - The member's primary care provider (a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant) must prescribe the device or software.
  - Other professionals may be included as needed for determining motor or other needs, such as physical access to the device.
3. There is limited coverage of non-dedicated devices.

MassHealth **may** cover non-dedicated devices under certain circumstances. The

following is only a **high-level summary** from the *Guidelines for Medical Necessity*. Member requests for non-dedicated devices must meet all of the following criteria:

- Under age 21;
- A diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder; and
- Severe expressive communication disorder.
- The total cost to MassHealth for a comparable noncovered, non-dedicated device **must be** equal to or less than the net cost of the approved, covered (dedicated) AAC device.
- For purposes of this cost comparison, MassHealth will compare its net cost for a dedicated device after applying any costs *covered by a member's insurance other than MassHealth (third-party liability or TPL)* to the cost of a non-dedicated device.

### Q: What type of non-dedicated device does MassHealth cover?

- Covered Apple iPad model or comparable models
- Covered iPad Capacity: 32GB

### Q: Will MassHealth cover an iPad model other than the iPad model stated in the bulletin?

MassHealth will cover a comparable model with 32GB capacity.

### Q: What is the appeal process?


Members who choose to appeal must follow the MassHealth member appeal process outlined in the PA denial letter. Information about the member appeal process is available at <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-appeal-a-masshealth-decision>.

## Submitting a PA Request

### Q: Who can submit a PA?

**Non-dedicated device:** The PA request MUST be submitted by an enrolled MassHealth speech/language therapist.

### Q: Where does a provider submit the PA?

- Providers should submit all information related to the PA request through the Provider Online Service Center (POSC).
- Please reference the PA submission job aid for instructions on how to submit a PA on the MassHealth Provider Online Service Center (POSC): [Create an AAC Non-Dedicated Device Request.](#) 
- If providers have any questions about POSC access, please contact MassHealth's Prior Authorization Help Line at 1-800-862-8341, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. ET.

### Q: What additional information must be submitted with a PA request for a non-dedicated device?

1. The PA request MUST include the following information:

- Apple iPad model or comparable models

**Questions about which iPad model is covered** should be directed to MassHealth's Prior Authorization Help Line at 1-800-862-8341.

- The iPad software, if applicable (provide details: e.g., name of software).
- The iPad protective case, if applicable (list the name of the Apple protective case and preferred color).
- The follow-up visit for the member with the MassHealth-enrolled speech/language pathologist to instruct the member in the appropriate use of the AAC device and accessories furnished for the member.
- DME information (e.g., accessory mounting systems) ONLY if the member requires DME items. The following DME information MUST be included on the PA, if applicable:
  - the enrolled MassHealth **DME provider NPI**; and

- **the DME products** and the DME quote or invoice for the product.
2. The clinical documentation that supports a request for non-dedicated AAC as described in Section 3.B.2 of the *Guidelines for Medical Necessity* (<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/masshealth/guidelines/mng-aac.pdf>) **must** include, but is not limited to:
- A written prescription signed by the member’s primary care provider.
  - An evaluation by a speech/language pathologist experienced in AAC service delivery. Note: The evaluation does not need to be provided by a MassHealth-enrolled provider.
  - A copy of a recent evaluation documenting a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder made by a licensed physician or psychologist experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of autism with developmental or child/adolescent expertise.
  - Supporting documentation signed by the submitting speech/language pathologist attesting that the recommended device or software is to be used for the purpose of communication.


3. Does the written prescription have to include all the information from the *Guidelines*?

A simple prescription from the primary care provider should suffice, given that the SLP will be doing an extensive evaluation.

4. Are there exceptions to the AAC evaluation having to be completed and dated within six months before the PA submission date as per the *Guidelines*?
- For evaluations more than six months old, MassHealth requires a new evaluation to ensure that the evaluation adequately represents the child’s current functional status.
  - MassHealth may consider evaluations that are more than six months old only if there is strong evidence that the evaluation reflects the member’s current functional status.

## Procedure Codes to Submit PA Requests for Non-Dedicated Devices

**Q:** Are there any specific procedure codes that must be used to submit a PA request for a non-dedicated device?

1. You will need the procedure codes and modifiers when submitting the PA request.
2. The codes are listed below and are also listed in the Job Aid "[Create an AAC Non-Dedicated Device Request.](#)" 

ITEMS	PROCEDURE CODES AND DESCRIPTIONS	MODIFIERS	INFORMATION
iPad	E2510 - Speech generating device, synthesized speech, permitting multiple methods of message formulation and multiple methods of device access (MassHealth usage of this code with modifier is for non-dedicated speech generating device)	TW	MassHealth will purchase and will mail to the therapist for delivery to the member.
iPad software	E2511 – Speech generating software program	TW	MassHealth will purchase and load the software on the non-dedicated device and will mail to the therapist for delivery to the member.
iPad Protective Case	E2599 - Accessory for speech generating device, not otherwise classified (protective case)	TW	MassHealth will purchase and will mail to the therapist for delivery to the member.
Follow up Visits	92609 - Therapeutic service(s) for the use of speech generating device, including programming and modification	TW	No changes. MassHealth will pay the existing MassHealth rate.  See MassHealth Clinical Guidelines.
DME Provider	E2512 - Accessory for speech generating device, mounting system  E2599 - Accessory for speech generating device, not otherwise classified [not covered if used as a modification to home internet or phone services]	TW	

## iPad Information

### Q: If a request for a non-dedicated device is approved, who will purchase the iPad?

MassHealth will purchase the iPad, Apple software, and Apple accessories.

MassHealth will download the software on the iPad and will ship to the member's SLP for delivery to and instruction of the member.

### Q: Does MassHealth provide a trial for the iPad?

MassHealth's expectation is that the member's SLP will provide the member with an iPad loaner. For questions related to the trial, please call MassHealth's Prior Authorization Help Line at 1-800-862-8341, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. ET

### Q: Can the SLP use for the trial an iPad model that is comparable to the MassHealth- allowed iPad model?

The model used for the trial should be the same or similar enough to the one being requested to ensure the device is appropriate for the child.

## Repair And Warranty

### Q: Does MassHealth provide a warranty?

MassHealth will purchase the two-year AppleCare+.

### Q: How do members access services and repairs for the iPad and accessories?

1. Apple products (iPad, software, accessories):

MassHealth is in discussion with Apple and its internal team to determine the best method to provide a service solution to members who have Apple products.

MassHealth may consider the member's continued ability to effectively use a device, including the presence of significant behaviors affecting the ability to effectively use a device, when making determinations about coverage for the repair or replacing of these products.

2. iPad accessories provided through MassHealth's DME program:

For accessories provided by the DME program for the non-dedicated device/iPad, current MassHealth repair DME protocol will be used.

## Resources

Guidelines for  
Medical Necessity

MassHealth created clinical guidelines for dedicated and non-dedicated devices. The guideline is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices and it is located at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/masshealth/guidelines/mng-aac.pdf>.

[Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices \(PDF\)](#) 

Bulletin about Non-  
Dedicated Devices

MassHealth published All Provider Bulletin 266: [MassHealth Coverage of AAC Non-Dedicated Device New Prior Authorization Process](#). 

Job Aid for  
Submitting PA

MassHealth created a job aid to assist providers when submitting a PA for AAC non-dedicated devices on the POSC. The Create an AAC Non-Dedicated Device Request is available at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/newsroom/masshealth/providers/mmis-posc/first-time-user/get-trained.html>.

[Create an AAC Non-Dedicated Device Request](#) 

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Prior Authorization  
Help Line

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