

AB 582 (Chesbro) Medi-Cal: Custom Rehabilitation

POSITION: SUPPORT

Background and Problem

Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) refers to individually constructed manual and power wheelchairs, adaptive seating systems, alternative positioning systems, and other mobility devices. CRT products require a physical evaluation, a technology assessment, a home assessment, research and recommendation, measuring, fitting, simulations and trials, mixing/matching products from different manufacturers, documentation and funding approval, significant client/caregiver training and education, refitting and ongoing maintenance and modifications to address changes in an individual's medical and functional needs.

The Medi-Cal program currently includes Complex Rehabilitation Technology (CRT) in the durable medical equipment (DME) benefit category. However, the Medi-Cal program fails to recognize the level of professional resources required in providing the equipment, the degree of difficulty involved in tailoring equipment to the individual, and the need to continually adjust and service the equipment. The result is reduced access to the beneficiary, reduced quality of the product, and a loss of cost efficiency in the delivery of these sophisticated products and services

Who Uses Complex Rehabilitation Technology?

CRT is used exclusively by children and adults with significant lifetime disabilities and chronic or debilitating medical conditions such as Cerebral Palsy (CP), Muscular Dystrophy (MD), Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Spinal Cord Injury, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS-Lou Gehrig's disease), and Spina Bifida. CRT is one component of a client's integrated health care plan.

Who are the Specialists that Provide CMT?

CRT equipment is specifically fitted to individuals by an interdisciplinary team consisting of, at a minimum, a Physician, a Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist, and an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP). They collaborate on an assessment of the clients' special needs and what equipment is needed for the individual to perform activities of daily living independently. To be effective the CRT equipment must be monitored and adjusted on a regular basis so that individuals can continue to perform their daily and routine activities.

What Does AB 582 Do?

AB 582 improves consumer access and continuing maintenance of custom wheelchairs by creating a separate category for complex medical technology in the Medi-Cal fee-for-service and managed care programs that are separate from all other types of durable medical equipment (DME). AB 582 will

1. Provide the supports necessary for patients with complex rehabilitation technology needs to stay in their home or community setting, prevent avoidable institutionalization and reduce secondary medical complications by assuring quality and accessible custom wheelchair providers
2. Ensure access to appropriate technology and support services for patients using CRT including needed wheelchair repairs and rentals
3. Improves consumer protections for complex rehabilitation technology services by establishing Medi-Cal provider certification and accreditation standards
4. Institute greater cost efficiency for complex rehabilitation technology by allowing for Medi-Cal reimbursement for custom wheelchairs on the entire device not just certain components.

Impact of AB 582 on People Living with Multiple Sclerosis

Individuals living with multiple sclerosis may deal with physical, functional and cognitive challenges every day. Some may require a customized wheelchair to continue to live in their homes, actively participate in their community, and independently perform daily activities. A separate benefit category in Medi-Cal will improve and protect access to CRT devices and services for individuals with MS who have significant disabilities, and assure that the providers meet quality assurance standards to safeguard patients and minimize the extent and costs of their medical care.