

Alberta Health

Alberta Aids to Daily Living Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits

Policy & Procedures Manual

June 21, 2021

Classification: Public



Revision History

Description	Date
Revised throughout to reflect transition to Alberta Blue Cross	June 21, 2021
Updated links.	April 1, 2019
Policy format update consistent with other mobility benchmark benefits. Additional vendor criteria added under C-05. QFR policy expanded to clarify criteria for approval.	July 14, 2017
General formatting updated to separate Policy and Procedure for each policy. Policies renumbered. See updated Table of Contents.	February 1, 2015
Policy C-10: removed	September 1, 2014
Policy C-10: Added C220 and C225 for two and four wheeled walkers respectively. Removed 6 month wait criteria for C066.	July 1, 2014
Policy C-10: C064 and C066 added description for clarification	July 1, 2013
Policy C-03: under bullet, "Use in acute care facilities, remove "or Continuing Care Centers".	April 22, 2013
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Policy C-01: Minor wording changes to reflect policies and increase clarity.	April 1, 2013
Policy C-03: Minor wording format to draw attention to specific information.	April 1, 2013
Policy C-06: Added (c) to ensure vendors are aware of replacement parts obligation (not new)	April 1, 2013
Policy C-08: Added step for QFR.	April 1, 2013
Policy C-09: Expanded QFR process description.	April 1, 2013
Additional information on walkers distributed into appropriate policies.	April 1, 2013
Policy C-10: Benefits rearranged in numerical order. Slow-down brakes description added.	April 1, 2013

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Policy C – 01

Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits Description

Policy Statement

AADL provides funding for walking aids and accessories for AADL clients with chronic, long-term difficulties in ambulation to enhance their independence and ability to participate in daily activities, increase safety during these activities and prevent the need for a higher level of care.

Best practice supports the use of walking aids to increase safety outcomes.

AADL walking aids and accessories benefits include specialty canes and crutches, two and four wheeled walkers and accessories required for clinically assessed needs.

Slow down brakes and oxygen holders are considered accessories for four wheeled walkers. Not all walkers can accommodate slow down brakes and oxygen holders.

AADL uses a benchmark model to fund walking aids and accessories benefits found on the Approved Product List APL-C. See Policy C-10 for definition of benchmark model.

Products and pricing on the APL are reviewed annually and are subject to change by AADL at any time during the year.

Walking aids and accessories benefit authorizations are processed through the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal.

AADL Approved Manufacturers of these products are listed on the C-APL. Manufacturers may apply to become an AADL Approved Manufacturer at any time.

Walking aids and accessories benefits are considered owned by the AADL client once the funding is released to the client's vendor.

A client may enter a rental agreement with an AADL vendor for temporary or short-term use of this type of equipment. AADL does not reimburse clients for rental charges associated with temporary, short-term use of walking aids.

Policy C – 02

Eligibility Criteria

Policy Statement

The Eligibility Criteria Policy assists clients, guardians, authorizers and vendors in identifying eligibility to access walking aids and accessories benefits.

Clients must meet general eligibility requirements found in AADL General Policies and Procedures online at:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>.

A client's eligibility for walking aids and accessories benefits must be determined by an AADL authorizer prior to authorization.

AADL provides funding for **walking aids** for clients who meet all the following criteria:

1. Client has chronic, long term walking impairment;
2. Client's weight falls within the weight limits of the equipment; and
3. The client has no other benefit for walking function with the exception of prosthetics or orthotics.

AADL provides funding for **walking aid accessories** for clients who meet the following criteria:

1. For oxygen related accessories, the client must receive oxygen benefits through the AADL program.
2. For forearm attachments and slow down brakes, the client must have documented clinical need, e.g. upper extremity impairment, ataxic gait.

Clients who are likely to require oxygen/slow down brakes in the future must be provided four-wheeled walker models that can accommodate these accessories at a later date.

AADL does **NOT** provide funding for walking aids and accessories benefits for:

- Short-term interventions or use such as pre- or post-operative ambulation needs.
- Use in acute or sub-acute care facilities. The equipment may be ordered as part of a discharge plan when client is returning to the community.
- Clients who are non-compliant.
- Options chosen for personal preference or not clinically indicated.

AADL provides a limited number of walking aids and accessories benefits per eligible client based on current best practice and expected use. See the Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits Approved Product List (APL) for specific limits.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Confirm clients meet AADL eligibility requirements.
2. Confirm clients' previous benefit consumption:
 - Refer to the Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits APL for quantity limits at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
 - Refer to the patient inquiry screen on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal and check product consumption.
 - Refer to Policy C-06 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.
3. Inform clients of their eligibility status.

Clients:

1. Confirm eligibility with authorizer.
2. Sign client declaration form.

Vendors:

1. Check clients' previous benefit consumption:
 - Refer to the Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits APL to determine quantity limits for each walking aid and accessory at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
 - Check on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal (OHP) for client's benefit consumption history.
 - Refer to Policy C-06 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.

Alberta Blue Cross:

1. Responds to telephone or email requests for information on walking benefits eligibility, and provides reference to the AADL website for further information at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
2. Adjudicates authorizations submitted through the OHP.

Policy C – 03

Authorizer Qualifications

Policy Statement

The Authorizer Qualification Policy facilitates accountability and transparency.

AADL accepts applications from Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Physiotherapists (PTs) who meet the general eligibility criteria set out in Policy GN-03 Application to be an Authorizer in the AADL General Policies and Procedure Manual at:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>

Walking Aids and Accessories are considered a primary product range for OTs and PTs as set out in Policy GN-03. See policy for further explanation on Primary and Secondary Product Ranges.

Authorizers and assessors must be competent in assessments and related interventions for impaired ambulation. Knowledge on the purpose of the various options and features on walking aids is necessary.

Procedure

AADL Authorizer Applicants:

1. Confirm eligibility.
2. Complete the authorizer application form at:
<https://formsmgmt.gov.ab.ca/Public/AADL2218.xdp>
3. Complete the requisite authorizer training and authorize once approved by AADL in accordance with policies and procedures.
4. Register with Alberta Blue Cross as a provider.

AADL:

1. Provides authorizer online pre-requisite training module.
2. Provides in-house training for primary product ranges.
3. Monitors authorizer activities and determines compliance with policies and procedures.

Policy C – 04

Authorization Process

Policy Statement

The Authorization Process Policy promotes effective and efficient authorization of benefits. Walking Aids and Accessories benefit authorization includes the assessment, equipment trial and the submission of a valid authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal (OHP).

Authorizers must adhere to the general policies and procedures for authorizing AADL benefits and follow the AADL procedure for authorizing walking aids and accessories benefits.

Whenever possible, authorizers should access loaner programs for walking aids and accessories for palliative clients to reduce client costs associated with cost share.

Assessment:

Assessments should be in the client's home environment to ensure the equipment is suitable in that environment. As an alternative, a simulated home environment may be used if able to replicate. The mode of transporting the equipment should be considered. Equipment which has been purchased by AADL and is found to be inappropriate for the client's home or cannot fit in the client's vehicle is not replaced by AADL.

Assessments must consider the following clinical elements: gait, range of motion, posture, sustained grip strength, and balance.

The assessment date on the authorization is the date the assessment is completed, including eligibility and equipment trial.

Equipment Trial:

Equipment must be from an Approved Manufacturer listed on the C-APL that meets the generic description.

Walking Aids and Accessories Vendors will provide equipment for a trial period that must not exceed two days. At the end of the trial period, the equipment must be returned. The client may not keep the trial equipment.

Authorization Submission:

Authorizations are entered on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal after the client's product consumption history has been reviewed to confirm eligibility for the benefit.

Authorizations for walking aids and accessories benefits expire when the benefit has been provided to the client and the associated vendor claims have been processed or within a year of the assessment date.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Confirm client eligibility for benefit. Refer to Policy C-02 Eligibility Criteria – Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits.
2. If benefit requested is over frequency limit, complete the Quantity and Frequency Request (QFR) authorization on the OHP and upload relevant documents. Refer to Policy C-06 - Quantity and Frequency Limits.
3. Assess client or review assessment if assessor is not the authorizer. Client assessment must be completed in home environment or simulated home environment. Consider ability to transport walker in vehicle.
4. Document assessment details and clinical rationale to support the provision of walking aids and accessories benefits. This must be kept in the client's file and submitted to AADL upon request. Ensure the client understands any costs that may incur. See Benchmark Price and Upgrade Costs under C-07 Definitions.
5. Provide client with choice of vendors as per list of AADL Approved vendors. Policies for the use of trial equipment should be explained to the client. See form: "AADL Trial Equipment Use" on the AADL website. Arrange for trial equipment to be returned to the vendor once the trial has been completed.
6. Determine where equipment is to be delivered once ordered and arrange for follow-up as appropriate.
7. Complete Authorization on OHP and submit. Include criteria-related information as required.

Include benefit catalogue number.

8. Have client sign declaration form.
9. Advise client that AADL will not reimburse clients for any rental charges if the client chooses to rent equipment.

Clients:

1. Fully participate in assessment and trial.
2. Return equipment to AADL approved vendor after trial period is over.
3. Sign client declaration signifying agreement and understanding.

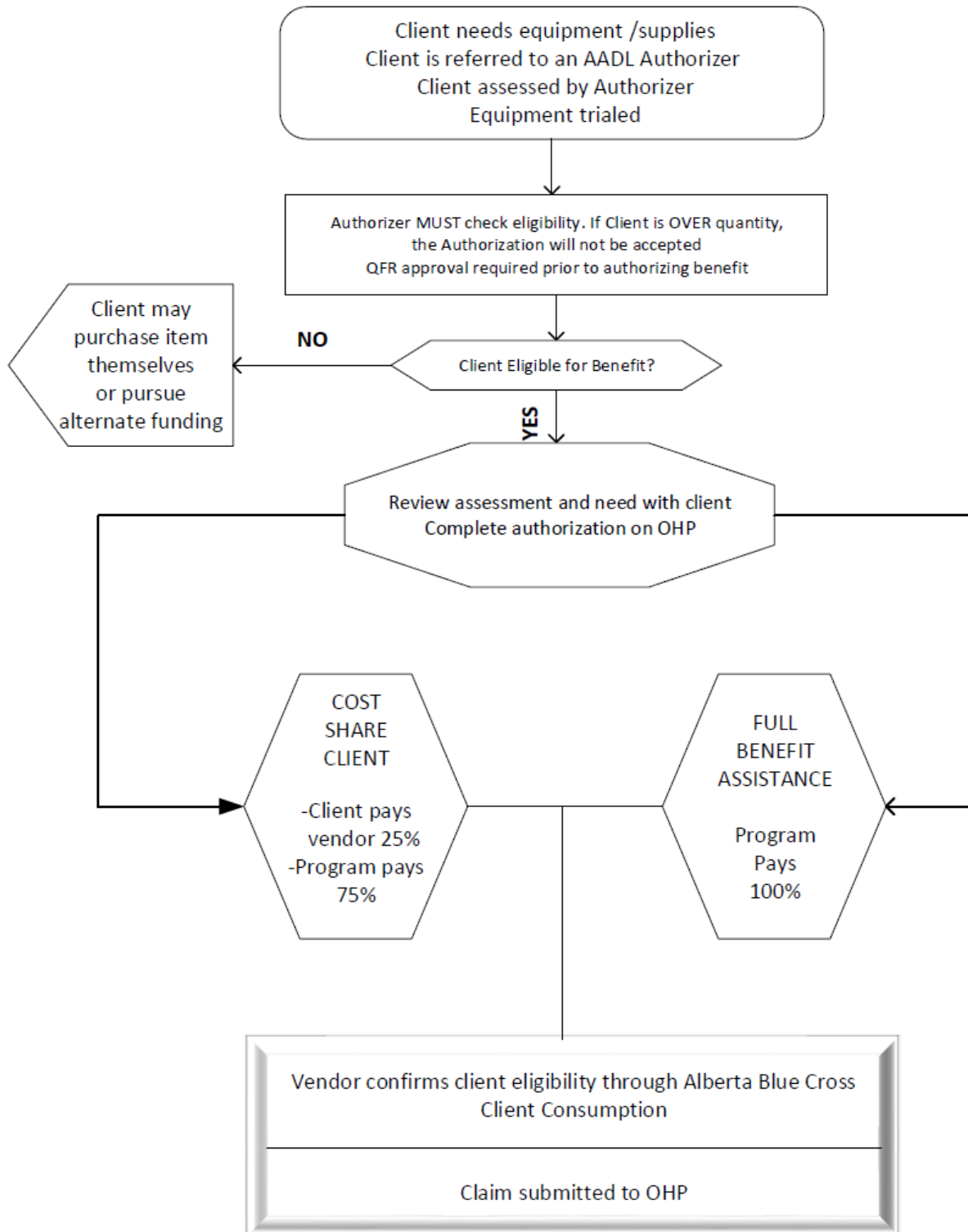
Vendors:

1. Provide trial equipment as requested by the Authorizer.
2. Check for authorization on the OHP and confirm eligibility by referring to client's consumption history.
3. Provide benefit.

Alberta Blue Cross:

1. Reviews authorizations for compliance and accuracy.
2. Processes valid authorizations.

Authorization Process Flow Chart for “C” Benefits



Policy C – 05

Vendor and Trained Provider Qualifications Policy

Policy Statement

AADL Approved Walking Aids and Accessories Vendors must meet the following criteria:

- Meet AADL's general vendor criteria as outlined the General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Adhere to benchmark pricing as outlined in the General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Must have an area in the store that allows clients to trial the equipment and provide authorizers with equipment for trial purposes.
- Must have a service area allocated on the premises that will allow for the provision of minor repair services on walking aids and accessories.

Product/Equipment:

- Stock on site a minimum of:
 - a) choice of at least one AADL-approved manufacturer product for Four Point Canes, Forearm Crutches and at least two manufacturer products for Two Wheeled Walkers.
 - b) choice of two different AADL approved manufacturer products for Four Wheeled walkers, must have at least one each of a standard, heavy duty, tall and wide models fully set up on display.
 - c) common replacement/repair items and accessories (e.g., forearm attachments, slow down brakes, wheels, standard brake parts, handle grips and rubber tips).
- AADL Vendors must ensure walking aids and accessories provided through AADL meet all quality standards set out in the Approved Product List.

Trained Provider Qualifications:

- Maintain a minimum of one staff member who is has knowledge of and experience with walking aids and accessories. Qualifications include knowledge and experience in the repair of small equipment.

- Ensure staff are educated on AADL Policies and Procedures as stated in the most current AADL Program Manual, Approved Product List, and updates.
- Ensure staff have the necessary expertise regarding the provision of AADL benefits and associated invoicing and business processes.

Policy C – 06

Providing Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits

Policy Statement

The Providing Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits Policy promotes effective and efficient provision of benefits.

Providing Walking Aids and Accessories benefits includes an equipment trial with the client, providing the equipment, fitting the equipment to the client, documenting, client billing and claims.

AADL Vendors must have an agreement with AADL and Alberta Blue Cross to provide Walking Aids and Accessories benefits.

AADL Vendors must ensure walking aids and accessories provided through AADL funding meet all quality standards set out in the Approved Product List.

AADL uses a benchmark pricing model for walking aids and accessories benefits. The AADL vendor must offer the AADL client at least one walking aid (and accessories) for a price equal to or below benchmark prices on the Approved Product List.

Clients must be advised that they should purchase insurance to cover the cost of replacements should the equipment be lost, stolen, or damaged.

Vendors are responsible for the initial assembly and set up of all walking aid benefits provided to a client. Example of assembly: walker set at appropriate height for client.

Clients are responsible for repairs and maintenance of all the walking aid benefits. See Policy C-08 Ownership and Responsibilities.

Procedure

AADL Authorizers:

1. Arrange follow-up to ensure the walking aid and any additional accessories are of benefit to the client.
2. Complete **documentation**, including:
 - Client able to operate walking aid (and any additional accessory).
 - Client provided with and understands instructions on wear and care of walking aid (and any additional accessories).

- Client informed of recommendation to purchase insurance to cover equipment in case of loss, damage or theft.
- Client satisfaction with fit.

Clients:

1. Clients (or their guardian/trustee) pay the cost-share portion (unless exempt) directly to the vendor for selected equipment.
2. Receive walking aid and any additional accessories and confirm satisfaction that the equipment fits and meets specifications.
3. Ensure ability to operate walking aid and any additional accessories.
4. Understand responsibility for the care and maintenance of the equipment as equipment is not replaced due to damage outside of normal wear and care.

Vendors:

1. Provide walking aid and any additional accessories and confirm equipment meets specifications.
2. Provide written instructions on walking aids and accessories wear and care.
3. Document client satisfaction and/or person and designation of person accepting responsibility for client satisfaction of the equipment.
4. Confirm eligibility on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Portal for the benefit prior to providing
5. Enter the claim on the OHP on the day it is provided to the client (service date).

AADL:

1. Coordinates vendor agreements.

Alberta Blue Cross

1. Conducts audits on authorizers' and vendors' compliance with policy and procedures for quality assurance and accountability purposes.
2. Audits charges on claims for equipment submitted by vendors and pays vendor claims

Policy C – 07

Quantity and Frequency Limits for Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits

Policy Statement

The Quantity and Frequency Limits for Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits Policy ensures transparency, consistency and accountability.

AADL sets limits on the number of Walking Aids and Accessories benefits funded per eligible client based on current best practice and expected wear. See the Approved Product List – Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits for specific limits at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>.

Walking Aids will only be replaced if:

- The equipment has been maintained and has been used as designed (normal wear); and
- The current equipment was ordered for long term needs; and
- The client's condition has changed and the current equipment no longer meets the clinically assessed basic need.

A Quantity and Frequency Request (QFR) authorization is submitted on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal. The following documents must be uploaded:

- QFR Request Form.
- Other supporting documentation.
- Client declaration.

Refer to the QFR policies in the general AADL Policy and Procedure Manual at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>.

Requests to replace four-wheeled walkers to another model that can accommodate an oxygen holder or slow down brakes must include rationale as to why this change was not anticipated during the current walker assessment.

The AADL Program **does not replace** equipment in cases of authorizer error or that have been lost, stolen, misused or damaged.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Explain policy and process to client, ensuring client understands.

Clients:

1. Maintain care of walking aid and accessory to prolong life of benefit provided through AADL and to prevent need for premature replacement of benefit.
2. Pursue alternate funding sources prior to requesting additional funds from AADL.
3. Seek alternate funding for equipment needs that fall outside the quantity and frequency limits.

Vendors:

1. Identify clients who require a QFR to replace a walking aid funded by AADL. Refer these clients to an AADL authorizer for reassessment.
2. Educate client on wear and care of equipment, and availability of maintenance parts to prolong life of benefit and prevent need for early replacement.
3. Prevent need for QFRs by replacing or repairing equipment when under warranty or when it is cost effective (see Policy C-10 Definitions: Cost Effective Repairs).
4. Provide AADL funded replacement equipment to client when valid authorization has been confirmed.

Alberta Blue Cross

1. Receives and log QFR requests.
2. Forwards QFR requests to AADL for adjudication.
3. Updates QFR status on the OHP which can then be viewed on the provider portal.
4. Notification of the decision will be sent to the client and authorizer.

Policy C – 08

Ownership and Responsibility Repairs and Maintenance

Policy Statement

AADL provides clear and consistent guidelines and procedures for responsibilities related to maintaining and repairing AADL-funded walking aids to ensure transparency, consistency and accountability.

Walking aids and accessories funded by AADL are owned by the client.

Clients (family/guardian/trustee) are responsible to keep their AADL-funded equipment in good, safe working order through regular maintenance and repairs according to manufacturer recommendations.

Clients are responsible for the costs of maintenance and repairs outside warranty.

Warranty periods are listed in the AADL Approved Product List (APL) at:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>

Maintenance includes ensuring any moving parts are cleaned and move smoothly; checking and adjusting or replacing brakes as needed and replacing rubber tips or handles when worn.

AADL walking aids and accessories vendors provide warranty, repair and maintenance services on AADL funded equipment.

Government funded equipment is **never to be resold** by a client, authorizer, or vendor.

Once the client no longer requires the equipment, it may be donated to a community organization or individual in need.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Ensure client understands responsibility for care, and maintenance of AADL-funded equipment.
2. Advise clients to keep a record of the initial invoice from the vendor as well as any maintenance and repairs to equipment.

Clients:

1. Request information and/or equipment manual from vendor to become familiar with warranty, maintenance and repair recommendations from manufacturer.

2. Ensure reasonable care and maintenance of AADL-funded walking aids and accessories.
3. Accept responsibility to obtain insurance in case of damage or loss of equipment.
4. Keep a record of the serial number, make and model on the vendor invoice as proof of AADL funding.

Vendors:

1. Review care and maintenance of AADL-funded walking aids and accessories with clients. Provide manufacturer manual as available.
2. Ensure AADL “Not for Resale” sticker is adhered to the equipment.
3. Provide maintenance and repair services to clients as requested.
4. Assist client to be reassessed when equipment is no longer cost effective to repair based on AADL standard formula – repair should not exceed 50% of the cost of equipment purchased new.
5. If not cost effective to repair, advise client to get reassessed by an AADL authorizer.

Policy C – 09

Refusal of the Equipment

Policy Statement

AADL provides a Refusal of Equipment Policy to ensure transparency and accountability.

Clients who refuse equipment are not eligible for AADL funding for another walking aid benefit for a minimum of six months. By signing the Declaration form the client acknowledged they were prepared to accept the equipment that was authorized and ordered for them. During the authorization process the client agreed to trial the equipment and ensured their home and living situation accommodated the equipment.

Clients and/or authorizers must notify the vendor as soon as unforeseen problems arise and the equipment is no longer appropriate for the client. If the equipment has not yet been delivered to the client, the vendor may agree to place the equipment back in their inventory with no charge to AADL or the client. In that case, the authorization form must be cancelled by the authorizer.

Clients who request funding for the benefit after refusing the same type benefit must submit a letter explaining the circumstances of their refusal and assurance that they will accept the authorized benefit this time. The client must also agree to accept any costs associated with providing the benefit a second time, including any cost-share fees.

The authorizer must submit a QFR on behalf of the client who refused the equipment.

Clients who refuse to accept equipment a second time will not be eligible again for that benefit.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Advise client of the consequences of equipment refusal.
2. Complete a Quantity and Frequency Request authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal (OHP) for the item and upload the letter from the client (family/guardian/trustee) as supporting documentation.
3. If client requests the same benefit be authorized that was refused previously, obtain letter from client/family explaining circumstances and providing assurances described in policy above.

Clients:

1. Participate in reassessment with authorizer.
2. Write letter describing circumstances and providing assurances described above.
3. Agree to accept costs associated with replacing equipment.

AADL:

1. Receives the QFR and supporting documentation and reviews the circumstances around the refusal of the equipment.
2. Adjudicates and provides decision to Alberta Blue Cross.

Alberta Blue Cross

1. Updates OHP with decision and sends notification to the client and the authorizer.

Policy C – 10

Definitions

Approved Products List (APL)

The APL is a document on the AADL website outlining the products for which AADL provides funding. Only products listed on the Approved Product List are available through AADL.

Benchmark Pricing

AADL provides a generic description of a benchmark benefit and sets the benchmark price as the maximum price AADL will fund for any product that fits the generic description. The benchmark prices for walking aids and accessories are listed under the column Price Maximum in the APL. Vendors must provide at least one item within the benchmark price.

Community Recycle

AADL funded equipment identified as community recycle may be recycled within the community. The client may donate the equipment to another client, local community recycle pool or facility once it is no longer needed. It may never be resold.

Cost-effective Repairs

Repairs are considered cost effective when the cost of the repair does not exceed 50% of the cost to replace the entire walking aid.

Equipment Trial

An equipment trial is a trial that involves the client and caregiver trying the equipment to ensure the one chosen is appropriate. A trial must include accessing environments where the equipment will be used such as the bathroom and bedroom. Simulated environments are accepted. Trial equipment is provided by AADL Walking Aid and Accessories Vendors according to Trial Equipment Guidelines.

Palliative Client

A client is deemed palliative if in the end stage of a terminal illness (six months or less to end of life). Care is considered compassionate and focused on symptom relief.

Upgrade Costs

Upgrade is the term used to describe any costs for benefit features or options that are not covered by AADL and are the responsibility of the client. Cost-share portions are not considered part of the upgrade cost. Upgrades are over and above cost share.

Valid Authorization

An authorization is considered valid when information submitted to Alberta Blue Cross is complete and the client declaration form is signed and all necessary clinical rationale is documented, the client meets the relevant eligibility criteria and any requisite prior approval has been provided.