



Speech generating communication devices benefits

Alberta Aids to Daily Living
Program Manual Section AS

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Alberta Health
Alberta Aids to Daily Living
Telus House, 13th Floor
10020 100 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0N3

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Policy AS – 01

Eligibility Criteria

Policy Statement

Clients must meet general program eligibility requirements found in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures online at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>.

Eligibility for a speech generating communication devices (SGCD) must be determined by a speech-language pathologist who has been approved to be an AADL authorizer. Input from an occupational therapist who is an AADL SGCD authorizer is required if the client has mounting, access, positioning or ergonomic needs related to the device.

It is accepted practice that assessment and intervention to support people with complex communication needs is typically provided by a team which may include educators, and other clinical specialties and support personnel who will provide input into the plan for individuals who receive speech generating communication devices.

In addition to the general AADL policies and procedures, clients must meet the following criteria for SGCD benefits:

- Have a severe communication impairment resulting in a complex communication need that cannot be met by using speech for the majority of communication interactions on a daily basis.
- Have an impairment that requires the use of a speech generating communication device for six months or more, or the client is identified as palliative.
- Must be assessed by a speech-language pathologist who is an AADL SGCD authorizer employed at a designated Speech Generating Communication Devices Service Centre (see Policy AS – 04 Service Centre Eligibility).
- Must be able and willing to take responsibility for care of the speech generating communication device or have family or a guardian who is able and willing to take responsibility.

Procedure

Authorizers:

- Confirm clients meet AADL eligibility requirements. If not eligible, consider other funding options.
- Confirm client meets SGCD benefit requirements as listed above.
- Conduct a clinical assessment and complete the Communication Assessment and Action Plan form to determine client's SGCD requirements.
- Complete authorization process via Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Clients:

- Actively participate in the assessment process.
- Sign Communications Assessment and Action Plan form.
- Abide by the AADL policy and procedures.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Advises AADL of pre-authorization process and relevant documents.
- Notifies SGCD vendor(s) of pre-authorizations and reference number when approved by AADL.

AADL:

- Receives Communications Assessment and Action Plan form, review application and confirm eligibility for the benefit.

Policy AS – 02

Client Roles and Responsibility

Policy Statement

Clients who receive a SGCD benefit from AADL must comply with the following:

- Agree to use the device for the primary purpose of communication,
- Maintain, care for, and protect the device provided in accordance with AADL policies and procedures, and
- Purchase private insurance to cover the cost of replacement if the device is lost, stolen or damaged.
- Be aware that AADL does not repair or replace devices that are lost or damaged due to negligence.

Procedure

Clients:

- Properly maintain and care for the device.
- Advise the service centre or authorizer if there is any concern about the device and its functioning.
- Purchase insurance to cover the cost of lost, stolen or damaged supplies and be aware that AADL does not repair or replace devices lost or damaged due to negligence.
- Return speech generating communication device to the service centre or authorizer if:
 - the device is no longer suitable for current needs
 - the device is no longer needed, or
 - the client moves out of province

Authorizers:

- Advise clients of all appropriate policies and procedures including the use, maintenance, care and protection of the device.
- Advise clients to acquire appropriate private insurance.
- Advise clients that AADL does not repair or replace devices lost or damaged due to negligence.
- Provide intervention as needed for client to use the device for effective communication.

Policy AS – 03

Authorizer Qualifications

Policy Statement

Speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists who apply to be AADL SGCD authorizers must be employed by an AADL-recognized service centre and meet the following requirements:

Speech-Language Pathologists:

- Are registered with the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA).
- Completed University-level or equivalent coursework in augmentative and alternative communication.
- Are familiar with current, evidence-based practice for augmentative and alternative communication assessment and intervention.
- Are familiar with the devices in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices applicable to the service centre level.
- Have a minimum experience of participating in eight augmentative and alternative communication assessments and application of augmentative and alternative communication systems that include speech generating communication devices. The AAC experience is not limited to AADL clients.
- Complete the following training modules available at <https://www.alberta.ca/aadl-authorizer-information-and-training.aspx>:
 - Module 1.1 – Introduction to AADL
 - Module 2.5 – Speech Generating Communication Devices Benefit Overview

Occupational Therapists:

- Are registered with the Alberta College of Occupational Therapists (ACOT).
- Are familiar with current, evidence-based practice for augmentative and alternative communication assessment and intervention.
- Are familiar with the devices in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices applicable to the service centre level.
- Have a minimum experience of participating in eight augmentative and alternative communication assessments and application of augmentative and alternative communication systems that include speech generating communication devices. The augmentative and alternative communication experience is not limited to AADL clients.
- Complete the following training modules available at <https://www.alberta.ca/aadl-authorizer-information-and-training.aspx>:
 - Module 1.1 – Introduction to AADL
 - Module 2.5 – Speech Generating Communication Devices Benefit Overview

Maintenance of Authorizer Status:

SGCD authorizers are expected to maintain their expertise by attending augmentative and alternative communication-related education courses and workshops. This may include sessions offered through local, national or international conferences, recognized assistive technology agencies and suppliers, participating in a community of practice, self-directed study and/or mentorships. Authorizer status may be denied or revoked by AADL following a review.

SGCD authorizers must:

- Complete a minimum of 10 hours of education in augmentative and alternative communication annually.
- Participate in eight augmentative and alternative communication assessments and application of augmentative and alternative communication systems over an 18-month period that includes speech generating communication devices. The augmentative and alternative communication experience is not limited to AADL clients.
- Retain a record of training and education required per year to maintain authorizer status.

- Provide an annual update of education and experience to service centre manager/coordinator.
- Participate in AADL SGCD Review Committee meetings, if applicable (service centres levels 2 and 3).
- Provide proof of augmentative and alternative communication related education to AADL upon request.

Policy AS – 04

Service Centre Eligibility

Policy Statement

Health or education-based agencies that provide augmentative and alternative communication services are eligible to be recognized by AADL as a Speech Generating Communications Devices Service Centre.

Service centres must:

- Have a mandate that includes assessment and intervention for the augmentative and alternative communication needs of their clients and employ clinicians responsible to provide augmentative and alternative communication services for people with complex communication needs.
- Have a range of devices from Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices appropriate to the service centre level available for assessments.
- Employ AADL-approved authorizers who work as part of an interdisciplinary team.
 - All assessments for SGCDs must be completed by a registered speech-language pathologist who is an AADL SGCD authorizer.
 - A registered occupational therapist who is an AADL SGCD authorizer is required to participate in the assessment if the client has mounting, access, positioning or ergonomic needs.

Service centres are designated as a Level 1, 2 or 3, depending on the types of services they provide. Service centre levels 2 and 3 are required to establish an assessment review process (refer to Policy AS-06) and need an individual who can act as chair for the assessment review meeting.

The service centre is responsible for ensuring AADL-approved SGCD authorizer(s) meet and maintain the qualifications identified for this AADL benefit. Authorizer composition at the service centre will vary depending on the designated level.

Any health or education-based agency wishing to become a Speech Generating Communications Devices Service Centre must complete the Speech Generating Communications Devices Service Centre Application form and forward to the AADL Speech-Language Pathology Consultant for review and decision. The form is located at:

<https://www.alberta.ca/aadl-forms-and-documents.aspx>

Service Centre Levels

Level 1 Service Centre:

Level 1 service centres must employ at least one speech-language pathologist designated to provide augmentative and alternative communication services. SGCD authorizers work in an environment that typically provides services to clients in specific age groups and/or diagnostic categories, with clients who require simple speech generating communication device solutions with direct access needs and no need for mounting. The speech-language pathologist authorizer must be familiar with the range of devices in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices designated for a Level 1 service centre.

Level 1 Speech-Language Pathologist Speech Generating Communications Devices Authorizers:

- Assess for categories A400 and A402 on the approved product list.
- Provide direct access products that do not require mounting.
- Submit Communications Assessment and Action Plan form to AADL Speech-Language Pathology Consultant for review and approval.
- Maintain and update knowledge of augmentative and alternative communication and speech generating communication devices.

Level 2 Service Centre:

Level 2 Service Centres employ SGCD authorizers who work collaboratively within a team to complete augmentative and alternative communication assessments. They work in an environment that provides service to clients in specific age groups and/or diagnostic categories with direct access needs. They are able to provide standard speech generating communication device solutions within the product range for this level.

Team composition must include a minimum of two speech-language pathologist SGCD authorizers. The team must include an occupational therapist SGCD authorizer if access needs for direct selection and mounting issues are present. Team members must be familiar with a range of devices in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices designated for a Level 2 service centre. The Level 2 service centre may choose to be a SGCD recycle centre.

Speech-Language Pathologist Authorizers:

- Assess for categories A400, A402, A406, A407 and A408 on the approved product list.
- Participate in the SGCD assessment review process.
- Submit Communication Assessment and Action Plan form to the AADL Speech-Language Pathologist Consultant for review and approval.
- Maintain and update knowledge of augmentative and alternative communication and speech generating communication devices.

Occupational Therapist Authorizers:

- Assess for direct access needs and mounting, category A410 on the approved product list.
- Participate in the SGCD assessment review process.
- Maintain and update knowledge of mounting products (category A410) for augmentative and alternative communication and speech generating communication devices.

Level 3 Service Centre:

Level 3 service centre authorizers work collaboratively in an environment that provides assessment and intervention services for clients of varying ages and diagnostic categories and with clients who have communication needs requiring a range of augmentative and alternative communication solutions. They are able to integrate complex assistive technology needs for access, mounting and communication and to provide custom solutions to meet the client's communication needs.

SGCD authorizers (speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists) must be familiar with the devices, mounting options and access equipment in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices so that clients are consistently presented with appropriate choices and guidance in the selection of a SGCD system. Staffing composition should also include program assistants and rehabilitation technicians. The Level 3 service centre processes and recycles speech generating communication devices.

Speech-Language Pathologist Authorizers:

- Assess for categories A400, A402, A406, A407 and A408 on the approved product list.
- Participate in the SGCD assessment review process.
- Submit Communications Assessment and Action Plan form to the AADL Speech-Language Pathologist Consultant for review and approval.
- Maintain and update knowledge of augmentative and alternative communication and SGCDs.

Occupational Therapist Authorizers:

- Assess for access and mounting needs, category A410, A421 and A422 from the approved product list.
- Participate in the SGCD assessment review process.
- Maintain and update knowledge of access and mounting products for augmentative and alternative communication and SGCDs.

Procedure

Service Centre:

- Complete the Speech Generating Communication Devices Service Centre Application form, attach the Speech Generating Communication Devices Authorizer Application form for each speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist wishing to become SGCD authorizers, and forward the package to the AADL Speech-Language Pathologist Consultant for a decision.
- Ensure all members of the SGCD team meet qualifications and continuing education requirements identified by AADL.
- Update AADL of any staffing changes as they occur.
- Maintain record of SGCD authorizers' education and experience gained and provide to AADL as requested.
- Support the ongoing educational needs of team members.
- Provide equipment to support device trials for assessment by clients.
- May accept responsibility to facilitate the recycling of SGCDs.

AADL:

- Reviews service centre application and approves, requests further information or rejects application.
- Reviews authorizer applications and confirms authorizer status with the service centre.
- Supports service centres and authorizers in meeting the standards and completing the processes to provide SGCDs to clients.
- Maintains and updates Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices.
- Establishes and monitors the service standards in consultation with service centres and other stakeholders.
- Conducts outcome measures for AADL SGCD services and client satisfaction and evaluates results to support the ongoing success of the SGCD benefit.

Policy AS – 05

Assessment Process

Policy Statement

The purpose of the augmentative and alternative communication assessment is to identify the client's communication needs and abilities, describe the device features required to support those needs and match the features to an appropriate SGCD system.

Clients must be assessed by AADL-approved SGCD authorizer(s) at an AADL-approved service centre. The assessment team must include:

- the client and, where applicable, caregiver/family member
- an AADL-approved speech language pathologist SGCD authorizer
- an AADL-approved occupational therapist SGCD authorizer when mounting, access, positioning or ergonomic needs exist
- other disciplines as required, e.g., educator, community clinicians, rehabilitation or assistive technology technician

As part of the assessment, an intervention plan must be developed incorporating the use of the SGCD and stating the functional communication goals and outcomes to be achieved.

Roles and responsibilities must be identified for the speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist authorizers and other related team members to support intervention required for the client.

Procedure

Speech-Language Pathologist Authorizers:

- Determine client eligibility for AADL benefits.
- Work with the client and family and relevant interdisciplinary team members as appropriate.
- Conduct an assessment of the client's needs and abilities, including language, cognition and communication.
- The assessment must include the following steps:
 - determine if an SGCD is the best tool for the client's communication needs
 - complete a feature analysis and provide suitable devices for the client to trial
 - gather evidence to show that the selected device can be used for functional communication purposes
 - determine if the client and family/caregivers have adequate ability to support the use of the SGCD in a variety of home and community settings and the ability to care for the device
 - identify an implementation plan with client and family that include goals, roles and responsibilities
- Complete the Communication Action and Assessment Plan form.
- Present to the SGCD Assessment Review Panel (service centre Level 2 and 3).
- If application is approved:
 - Consult SGCD inventory to determine if a recycled device is available.
 - Complete required documentation and forward to AADL for authorization.
 - Upon authorization of equipment by AADL, receive and set up SGCD system for client's use.
 - Provide ongoing client, family and care team support as needed on the use, care and maintenance of the SGCD.

Occupational Therapist Authorizers:

- Assess the client with the relevant interdisciplinary team members to determine appropriate access, mounting, positioning and ergonomic requirements to meet client needs and abilities (physical, vision, perception, cognition).
- Assess the client to determine appropriate direct or indirect access method and mounting.

- Identify any sensory or physical needs and abilities relevant to the use of a communication system.
- Assess the client for any positioning and ergonomic setup for SGCD use.
- Provide mounting and/or access equipment guidance and support during the device trial process.
- Determine if the client and family/caregivers have adequate ability to support the use of the SGCD in a variety of home and community settings and the ability to care for the device.
- Contribute to the Communication Assessment and Action Plan form and review process.
- Provide ongoing client, family and care team support as needed on the use, care and maintenance of the SGCD system.

Clients, with family support as needed:

- Actively participate in the assessment process.
- Collaborate with the assessment team to identify communication needs, goals and implementation plan.
- Provide feedback on assessment device trials to determine most appropriate SGCD to meet needs.
- Upon successful completion of the assessment, sign AADL documentation.
- If appropriate, pay the cost-share amount to manufacturer/distributor.
- Accept responsibility for the care and maintenance of the SGCD and use in accordance with stated goals.

Policy AS – 06

Assessment Review Process: Service Centre Level 2 and 3

Policy Statement

The assessment review process involves a panel of clinical peers and is an integral part of the assessment procedure at service centre Levels 2 and 3. The panel reviews the Communication Assessment and Action Plan requests for funding in accordance with AADL benefit criteria.

The assessment review process is designed to:

- establish a standard decision-making practice of quality assurance
- ensure that clinical decision-making around eligibility and implementation of benefits is fair, equitable and in keeping with AADL criteria
- support quality and consistency between the designated service centres
- reduce the revisions/questions from AADL and support the timely processing of requests and access to devices for clients

Membership

Each assessment review panel will be comprised of the clinical team from the service centre. All clinical team members from the service centre are encouraged to attend review meetings. Every panel must have the following in attendance:

- the speech-language pathologist SGCD authorizer(s)
- the occupational therapist SGCD authorizer involved in the assessment review process when the client has mounting and access needs
- a speech-language pathologist not involved in the assessment
- a meeting chair

The meeting chair may be the service centre coordinator, administrator or an authorizer who is not presenting client information. The role of the chair is to organize the meeting, coordinate the procedures, record and file the data and ensure the final application is complete and forwarded to AADL. The chair may be selected on a rotating basis.

Community clinicians are encouraged to participate in the assessment review process for their clients.

Meetings

The assessment review panel will meet as needed to review AADL Communication Assessment and Action Plan requests. Meetings will be at the call of the chair. Guest clinicians may attend the meeting at their regional assessment site or via audio visual conferencing, as available.

Procedure

Assessment Review Panel:

- The speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist SGCD authorizers present the clinical case for each client application, providing the rationale for recommending specific SGCD equipment and access equipment within the context of the client's Communication Assessment and Action Plan form.
- Team discussion regarding the recommendations and action plan is encouraged.
- Recommendation for approval and forwards to AADL for authorization or,
- Determine that the application is incomplete or that the client is ineligible. Readdresses when additional information is available and/or recommends alternative actions.

Policy AS – 07

Conditional Device Purchase

Policy Statement

Service centers are expected to have a variety of communication equipment available for client's use during the assessment process.

In some instances where a full assessment cannot be completed with the desired system, the authorizer may choose a conditional purchase from the SGCD manufacturer/distributor. A decision is required within 10 weeks of the original service date (i.e., shipping date). If the conditional purchase is successful, the client keeps the device provided. If the conditional purchase is unsuccessful, the system must be returned in its original state and in good working order within 10 weeks of the service date to the manufacturer/distributor.

Procedure

Speech-Language Pathologist Authorizers:

- Conduct an augmentative and alternative communication assessment to identify the appropriate communication device using a feature matching process.
- Initiate a conditional purchase if the most appropriate device is not available for use by the client from the Service Centre equipment pool, or from the manufacturer/distributor.
- Complete the Communication Action and Assessment Plan form and provide rationale for the conditional purchase. Include a manufacturer/distributor quote for the requested system.
- Have client/family sign the Communication Action and Assessment Plan form, and sign as authorizer.
- Advise client of expectations of conditional purchase.
 - Any applicable cost-share must be paid to the manufacturer/distributor before the device is shipped;
 - If the purchase is successful, the cost-share paid by the client is applied to the cost of the device.
 - If the purchase is unsuccessful, the cost-share amount is refunded, minus the 25 per cent cost-share on the return fee.
- Upon successful completion of the conditional purchase, complete the Communication Action and Assessment Plan form within 10 weeks of the service (shipping) date.
- Submit all documents via the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal as part of the authorization process.

Clients:

- Participate in the assessment process.
 - Pay the cost-share amount to manufacturer/distributor.
 - If successful, the cost-share paid by the client is applied to the cost of the device.
 - If unsuccessful, the manufacturer/distributor provides a refund to the client, minus the 25 per cent cost-share portion of the trial fee.
- Agree to the terms of the conditional purchase:
 - A conditional purchase is for a maximum of 10 weeks, which includes shipping time.
 - The client is responsible for the cost of any device or accessory that is damaged or lost while in the client's possession.
 - If the device is successful, the client may keep the device.
 - If the purchase is unsuccessful, return device and all accessories to Manufacturer/Distributor.
 - The communication device must be returned to the manufacturer/distributor in the same condition it was received.

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Receive authorization notification from Alberta Blue Cross for a conditional device purchase.

- Collect cost-share amount from client (if applicable) before shipping device to service centre for provision to the client/family.
- Receive authorization decision about the conditional purchase from Alberta Blue Cross within 10 weeks of original service date:
 - If successful, cost-share amount is applied to the purchase of device.
 - If unsuccessful, cost-share amount is refunded to client, minus the 25 per cent cost-share on the return fee.
- Advise AADL if the SGCD is missing parts or in disrepair when returned from client.

Policy AS – 08

Acquisition and Distribution of Speech Generating Communication Devices

Policy Statement

AADL supports the provision of SGCDs to eligible Albertans by reviewing, approving, ordering and funding the SGCD recommended by the SGCD authorizer.

Procedure

Speech-Language Pathologist Authorizers:

- Submit documentation to the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal:
 - Communication Assessment and Action Plan form
 - review recycle equipment options in the SGCD inventory
 - create authorization for each manufacturer/distributor quote for devices and any accessories required
 - signature page of Communication Assessment and Action Plan form signed by the client, family and authorizers
 - submit a quantity and frequency review request as required
- Receive confirmation of approval for valid authorization from Alberta Blue Cross.
- Receive device from manufacturer/distributor:
 - confirm equipment received is correct and complete
 - assemble device, software and any mounting and access as needed
 - affix “Property of Government of Alberta” stickers
- Meet with client to deliver device:
 - ensure client (and family, if applicable) is familiar with how to use SGCD
 - provide client with relevant AADL information sheets for SGCD and repairs
 - have client/family sign Receipt of Speech Generating Communication Device form

Clients:

- Pay cost-share amount, if applicable, directly to manufacturer/distributor.
- Meet with SGCD authorizer to receive SGCD system.
- Sign Receipt of Speech Generating Communication Device form.

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Receive notification and reference number for approved items from Alberta Blue Cross.
- Assemble SGCD system ready for shipment.
- Submit claim through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal and receive cost-share amount from client.
- Ship device to SGCD authorizer at service centre.

AADL:

- Receives Communication Assessment and Action Plan form and manufacturer/distributor quote(s) for completed SGCD authorizations from Alberta Blue Cross.
- Reviews documents and approves request or contacts authorizer about questions or omissions.
- Confirms decision on authorization with Alberta Blue Cross.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Notifies AADL when completed SGCD authorizations are received from a service centre.
- Notifies manufacturer(s)/distributor(s) with reference number to proceed with purchase.

- Processes claim for payment.

Policy AS – 09

Quantity and Frequency Limits

Policy Statement

Clients are eligible for SGCD benefits subject to quantity and frequency limits as stated in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices.

SGCD benefits are provided to eligible clients based on need; replacement outside of the limits stated on the approved product list occurs only when the current SGCD system is no longer suitable to meet the client's needs. This could be due to a change in the client's communication abilities, physical condition or the SGCD cannot be repaired in a cost-effective way.

SGCD systems are provided with one battery, one mounting system, one language system and the standard communication software that is original to the device.

The following requests are outside the quantity and frequency review process:

- benefits for which the client does not meet the eligibility criteria
- requests for medical equipment and supplies which are not on the approved product lists
- replacement of lost, stolen or damaged benefits
- replacement of benefits due to misuse or inadequate care and maintenance
- replacement of benefits for convenience or lifestyle
- replacement of benefits due to technological advancements
- funding for charges above AADL maximum approved limits (i.e., upgrading costs)
- AADL program cost-share exemption appeals (refer to Policy GN – 24)

Procedure

Clients:

- Advise authorizer if SGCD is no longer meeting their needs.

Speech-Language Pathologist SGCD Authorizers:

- Determine quantity and frequency limits for the SGCD system.
- Advise clients of quantity and frequency limits policy.
- Conduct the appropriate reassessment process with client to determine how client's needs have changed and how best to address these changes.
- If client requires a different SGCD before the established timeframe limits have elapsed, follow the AADL quantity and frequency review process (Refer to GN – 30 and GN – 31) to request a replacement SGCD.
- All quantity and frequency review requests must be submitted to AADL via the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal and require the following:
 - an assessment identifying clinical need
 - rationale explaining why the existing benefit no longer meets the client's clinical needs (i.e., a documented significant and stabilized change in clinical condition since the current benefit was provided). A Communication Assessment and Action Plan may be completed and attached to the quantity and frequency review request if applicable
 - refer to the AADL general policy and procedures manual for additional criteria

Policy AS – 10

Repairs

Policy Statement

The standard manufacturer/distributor's warranty applies to all AADL SGCD equipment. AADL does not pay for repairs on SGCD equipment covered by warranty. AADL will pay for one repair per calendar year when the damage is the result of normal wear and tear. This includes routine battery replacement and shipping costs.

All repairs are subject to cost-share by the client.

AADL may deny a repair request when cost of repairing the device is prohibitive, the device has had several repairs, the device is near the end of its usefulness, or other reasons at AADL's discretion. Refer to Policy AS – 13 Obsolete Equipment.

AADL does not pay for repairs for damages that are the result of abuse or misuse, as determined by the manufacturer/distributor.

Procedures

Clients:

- Refer to the SGCD Repair Information Sheet for specific instructions.
- If applicable, contact the manufacturer/distributor for technical support to identify whether device needs to be returned for repair.
- If the device needs to be returned for repair:
 - advise the SGCD authorizer that the SGCD is not working properly
 - obtain return authorization number from manufacturer/distributor if item is to be returned
 - follow the manufacturer/distributor instructions to ship device for repair estimate
 - pay cost-share portion of the cost of the repair, if applicable, directly to the manufacturer/distributor. Devices will not be shipped back until the manufacturer/distributor has received the client's cost-share portion

Speech-Language Pathologist SGCD Authorizers:

- Create authorization for SGCD equipment repair with device serial number and submit with vendor quote on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Evaluate device.
- Provide SGCD authorizer with cost estimate/work order for repair, including shipping costs.
- If damage appears to have resulted from abuse or misuse, client is then responsible for repair costs.
- Ship repaired device to client after receiving cost-share portion, if applicable.
- Process claim for repair through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Policy AS – 11

Recycle of Equipment and Recycle Centres

Policy Statement

All equipment funded by AADL remains the property of the Government of Alberta, unless specified otherwise in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices.

AADL clients who are no longer able to use the SGCD assigned to them are required to return the device to their service centre. SGCDs must be returned for the following reasons:

- the client is no longer able to use the specific SGCD or no longer needs to use an SGCD at all
- the client moves out of Alberta
- the client is no longer eligible for the AADL benefit
- the SGCD is deemed obsolete by AADL
- the cost of repair is prohibitive

Returned SGCDs in categories A400, A406, A410, and A422 that meet AADL repair guidelines are recycled for client use.

Recycled SGCD equipment is maintained in good working order and is suitable for re-use.

Service Centre:

- Service centre Level 1 is not expected to recycle inventory;
- Service centre Level 2 may choose to recycle or not based on the requirements listed below;
- Service centre Level 3 is expected to recycle SGCD equipment.

Procedure

To be a recycle service centre, the following is required:

- Space to store equipment.
- Capacity to clean equipment and reset to standard settings (i.e., eliminate any personal data from previous clients).
- Ability to identify that repairs/refurbishment is needed on returned equipment.
- Staff to update AADL SGCD inventory, including device name, serial number and details of features and components.
- Staff and resources to package and ship devices for repair/refurbishment
- Staff and resources to package and ship devices to other service centres for new client use.

SGCD Authorizers:

Upon receipt of a returned SGCD:

- Advise Alberta Blue Cross of any returned SGCD by providing the device name, serial number, features and components, client name and reason for return.
- Remove all personal client information and reset SGCD to original configuration.
- Ship device to manufacturer/distributor for repair or refurbishment as needed. Refurbished SGCDs are available for recycle to another eligible client.

Procedures for Refurbishment

Clients/Guardian/Family:

- Return SGCD to service centre or authorizer when it is no longer of use to client.
- Include shipping materials and all accessories provided by AADL.
- Provide the SGCD authorizer information about any concerns or issues with the device.

Service Centres/SGCD Authorizers:

- Receive device, shipping materials and accessories from client.
- Remove all personal client information and reset SGCD to original configuration.
- Arrange with manufacturer/distributor for the repair/refresh as needed, indicating contact information and alternate receiving party if applicable.
- Arrange return of SGCD to manufacturer/distributor for refurbishment.
- Create authorization for repair/refresh via Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Receive device and refurbishment instructions.
- Evaluate device and consider battery replacement, updating of operating system, replacement of any standard accessories that are missing and repair or replacement of defective parts.
- Provide service centre with quote for refresh/repair needs, estimate of time required and cost.
- Proceed as per direction from AADL SGCD benefit.
- Complete claim process through Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

AADL:

- Funds refurbishment of recycle equipment, subject to policy guidelines on repairs and obsolete equipment.

Policy AS – 12

Recycle-Out Process

Policy Statement

All equipment funded by AADL remains the property of the Government of Alberta, unless specified otherwise in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices.

The SGCD systems provided by AADL may comprise new or recycled equipment.

SGCD authorizers must first review the SGCD equipment inventory with Alberta Blue Cross when submitting an application for AADL funding.

Procedure

SGCD Authorizers:

- Complete the Communication Action and Assessment Plan form and create an authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- As part of the authorization process, consult the SGCD equipment inventory for a recycled SGCD that is a suitable match for the communication needs of the client.
- If a suitable match is available in the equipment inventory, select the item(s). The equipment will be shipped from the designated service centre to the receiving service centre.
- Following completion of the authorization process and payment of any cost share portion by the client, arrange for client to receive SGCD system.

Clients:

- Agree to pay cost-share for accessories and other equipment.
- Receive the SGCD system from the service centre.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Maintains and updates the SGCD equipment inventory.
- Provides access to the current SGCD equipment inventory for all SGCD service centres as part of the authorization process.

Policy AS – 13

Obsolete Equipment

Policy Statement

A speech generating communication device that meets one or more of the following criteria may be designated as obsolete:

- not working
- no longer manufactured
- replacement parts are no longer available
- the age and the cost of repair are prohibitive

If designated as obsolete, the SGCD will be disposed of as per Government of Alberta procedures.

Procedure

SGCD Authorizers:

- Determine that the device may meet the criteria to be declared obsolete.
- Provide AADL with the device name, serial number, age of device if known and any known issues. State any rationale to support declaring device obsolete.
- Follow Government of Alberta process for obsolete equipment as advised by AADL.

AADL:

- Receives information from a manufacturer, distributor or SGCD authorizer stating that a SCGD in need of repair meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - not working
 - no longer under warranty
 - no longer manufactured
 - replacement parts are no longer available
 - the age and the cost of repair are prohibitive
- Considers the following guidelines when making a decision to designate a particular SGCD obsolete based on age and cost of repair:
 - device is five years old or older and not in working order - designate as obsolete
 - device is between three and five years old and cost of repair is greater than \$1,000 – designate as obsolete
 - devices between one and three years old with a repair estimate greater than \$1,000 will be considered on a case by case basis with due consideration given to any previous repair history
 - devices with an initial cost of \$1,000 or less may be specified as not worth repairing--designated as obsolete
- Designates devices as obsolete where appropriate.
- Follows Government of Alberta process for declaring government property obsolete.

Policy AS – 14

Criteria for Speech Generating Communication Device Manufacturers and Distributors

Policy Statement

The AADL SGCD benefit has established criteria to guide the selection of manufacturers and distributors. These criteria apply to current and prospective SGCD manufacturers and distributors.

Procedure

AADL:

The following criteria are considered when reviewing a manufacturer or distributor's application for recognition as a supplier of SGCD benefits:

- Preference is given to manufacturers and distributors with:
 - a Canadian distributor
 - a provincial representative
 - established technical support and repair options available
 - capacity to provide loaner devices for assessment purposes
 - capacity to provide education around operation, use and care of their equipment

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Maintain the standards for the SGCD benefit as noted above.
- Advise AADL when a SGCD is, or is likely to be, discontinued.
- Advise AADL of equipment concerns or issues as appropriate.

Policy AS – 15

Manufacturer and Distributor Expectations

Policy Statement

AADL provides funding for SGCDs for Albertans who meet specific eligibility criteria. The approved SGCD is obtained from SGCD manufacturers and distributors that meet AADL standards outlined in Policy AS – 14 Criteria for Speech Generating Communication Device Manufacturers and Distributors. Approved manufacturers and distributors must be familiar with AADL's SGCD policies and procedures and abide by all policies and procedures that impact their roles.

Procedure

Manufacturers/Distributors:

- Be familiar with AADL SGCD policies and procedures.
- Accept and maintain the standards presented in Policy AS – 14 Qualifications for Speech Generating Communication Device Manufacturers and Distributors.
- Support the provision of SGCDs to eligible Albertans by adhering to the process described in Policy AS – 08 Acquisition and Distribution of Speech Generating Communication Devices.
- Support the care and maintenance of SGCDs by following the steps in Policy AS – 10 Repairs, and the procedures for refurbishment outlined in Policy AS – 11 Recycle of Equipment and Recycle Centres.
- Advise AADL when a SGCD is, or is likely to be, discontinued.
- Advise AADL of equipment concerns or issues, as appropriate.

Policy AS – 16

Approved Product List

Policy Statement

Products in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS - Speech Generating Communication Devices are reviewed annually. AADL will accept suggestions from authorizers for additions to the approved product list at any time. SGCDs considered for inclusion on the approved product list must have:

- a minimum of one year of production in the North American market
- a minimum of a one-year warranty that the product will be free of defects in material and workmanship
- carry a minimum comprehensive general liability insurance provided by the manufacturer
- be from an approved manufacturer or distributor, or a manufacturer or distributor that meet the standards for SGCD manufacturers and distributors as outlined in Policy AS – 14 Criteria for Speech Generating Communication Device Manufacturers and Distributors

Procedure

SGCD Authorizers:

- Advise AADL of product performance at any time.
- Submit requests for SGCD additions to the approved product list by providing the following information about the suggested SGCD:
 - statement that it meets the minimum standards stated in Policy AS – 16 Approved Product List and is from an approved vendor
 - statement about what the SGCD has to offer that is unique to the approved product list
 - information about any hands-on experience with the device
 - any other pertinent information

AADL:

- Determines SGCD inclusion or exclusion on the approved product list based on criteria stated in Policy AS – 16 Approved Product List and on evaluations, research, best practice and information from authorizers and other jurisdictions.
- May establish an ad hoc committee to review current and potential SGCDs.
- May contact authorizers for input on SGCDs being considered.
- Accepts product suggestions from authorizers for inclusion on the approved product list.

Policy AS – 17

Patient Claim Statement

Policy Statement

SGCD vendors must provide every client with a patient claim statement for each benefit invoiced to the AADL program. The statement can be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, and must include general information such as statement details, Alberta Blue Cross contact information and client data.

The patient claim statement is comprised of three sections: statement information, claim summary and claim details.

The claim summary displays the overall breakdown of how much each client is responsible for against the total claimed amount for all claims submitted:

- Total amount claimed – The sum of claimed amounts for all claims submitted.
- AADL will pay – The total amount that AADL will cover for all claims submitted.
- Client will pay – The total amount the client is responsible to pay for all claims submitted. This amount is the sum of any cost-share amount the client owes and upgrade charges that are not covered by AADL.

Clients must be provided with a copy of their patient claim statement.

Procedure

Vendors:

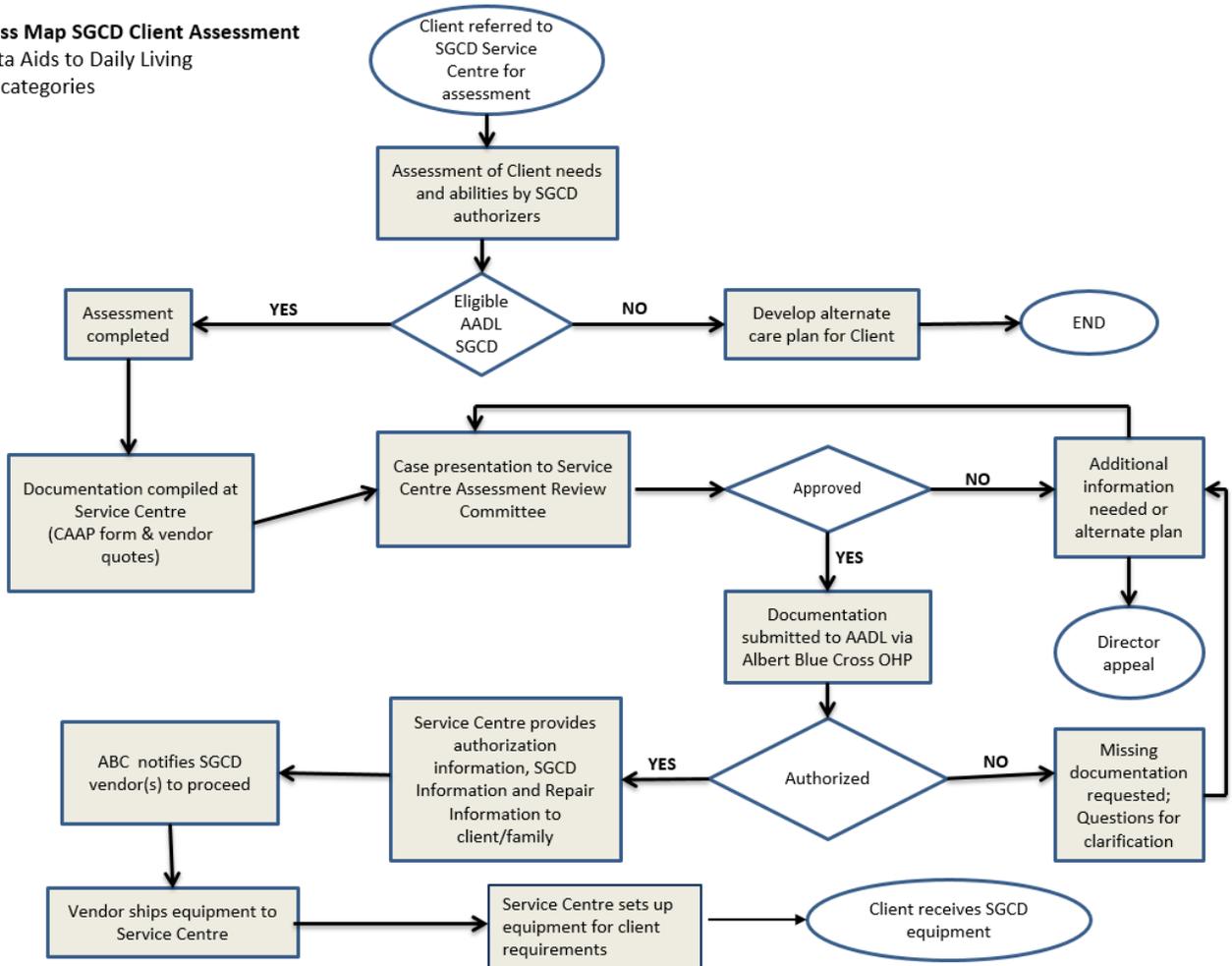
- Provide clients with a patient claim statement for AADL benefits. The patient claim statement must be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- For cost-share clients, identify the AADL contribution and the client's cost-share contribution for each benefit.
- For cost-share exempt clients, identify AADL's contribution for each benefit.
- Retain a copy of the patient claim statement on the client's file.

Alberta Blue Cross:

- Provide vendors with a patient claim statement through the online health portal as required.

Figure 1
Assessment Process Flow Sheet

Process Map SGCD Client Assessment
Alberta Aids to Daily Living
A400 categories
2014



Policy AS – 18

Definitions

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Augmentative and alternative communication includes all forms of communication other than oral speech that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants and ideas. People with severe speech or language problems rely on augmentative and alternative communication to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional.

Augmentative

Augmentative communication methods are ways to help children and adults with speech and/or language disorders that significantly limits their ability to use oral speech to communicate.

Alternative

Alternative communication methods are ways to help children and adults with speech and/or language disorders that excludes their ability to use oral speech to communicate.

Assessment Review Process

Also known as the peer review process, the assessment review process is conducted by a panel of clinical peers. It is an integral part of the assessment procedure at service centres Levels 2 and 3.

The panel reviews SGCD requests for funding in accordance with AADL benefit criteria and forwards applications to AADL for authorization

The purpose of the assessment review process is to establish a standard decision making practice of quality assurance for clients seeking to obtain SGCDs and is designed to:

- ensure that clinical decision-making around eligibility and implementation of benefits is fair, equitable and in keeping with AADL criteria
- support quality and consistency between the designated service centres
- reduce the revisions/questions from AADL and thus provide timely processing of requests and access to devices for clients

Communication Assessment and Action Plan (CAAP)

The Communication Assessment and Action Plan (CAAP) form provides the format and guidelines for the compiling and organizing the information gained from the speech and language assessment performed to determine the client's communication strengths and deficits. This supports clinicians in their decision making around the augmentative and alternative communication solutions appropriate for the client.

Palliative

Palliative refers to patients who have been diagnosed by a physician or nurse practitioner as being in the end stage of a terminal illness or disease, are aware of their diagnosis and have made a voluntary informed decision related to resuscitation, and for whom the focus of care is palliation and not treatment aimed at a cure.

A client is deemed palliative if in the end stage of a terminal illness when care is focused on symptom relief and not cure.

Service Centre

An organization/facility that dedicate resources to the provision of augmentative and alternative communication services and resources to clients with severe communication disorders or disabilities that result in the need for a SGCD in order to access funding from AADL.

Speech Generating Communication Device (SGCD)

Speech generating communication devices are electronic [augmentative and alternative communication](#) systems used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with severe speech and language disorders. The SGCD enables clients to verbally communicate their needs. SGCDs are important for people who have a limited means of interacting verbally, as they allow individuals to become active participants in communication interactions.

SGCD Authorizer

A speech-language pathologist with knowledge, training and experience in providing augmentative and alternative communication support to clients may apply to Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) to become a speech generating communication devices (SGCD) authorizer. An occupational therapist with knowledge, training and experience in providing augmentative and alternative communication mounting and access support to clients may also apply to AADL to become a SGCD authorizer.