

AAC Report Structure for Funding of Speech Generating Devices

Request for Speech Generating Device (SGD) Funding: Cerebral Palsy

Section 1: Demographic Information

- Name:
- Address:
- Phone Number:
- Date of Birth:
- Medical Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy
- Date of Onset:
- Speech Diagnosis: Expressive Language Disorder or Dysarthria
- Date of Onset:
- Medicare Number:
- Medicaid Number:
- Insurance Policy Number:

- Place of Residence:
- Primary Contact Name:
- Address:
- Phone Number:
- Relationship to Patient:

- Physician Name:
- Physician Phone Number:
- SLP Name:
- SLP Phone Number:
- Date of SLP Evaluation: (when the pt. tried devices)
- Date of Report:

Section 2: Current Communication Impairment

A. General Statements

1. Impairment type and severity (Diagnosis)

- Indicate Speech/Language diagnosis – Dysarthria, or Expressive Language Disorder. Must be an ICD-10 diagnosis.
- Describe impairment severity; [expressively, it MUST be SEVERE in nature. Receptively, a severe impairment could raise red flags, so describe them separately if possible].
- If client has had a device in the past, be sure to talk about what device it is, when they received it, who paid for it and why it isn't working for them now – MEDICALLY. Put this right in the first section so the reviewer doesn't have to read the entire report trying figure out why they are getting a new device.

EX: Client has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy and seizure disorder. He demonstrates the following communication skills: smiling/laughing and verbal approximation of about 10 familiar words. He is not able to communicate by pointing or head shaking/nodding. Due to severe dysarthria, he is unable to

imitate oral motor movements and he presents with global muscular weakness which significantly impedes his speech intelligibility. Speech articulation is significantly impeded by his oral motor deficits, resulting in decreased speech intelligibility, which is informally judged to be understandable less than 25% of the time. He is also able to respond to yes/no questions with head nodding, but this is not an effective means of communication and therefore the assessment for the need of a speech generating device was completed.

2. Anticipated Course of Impairment

- This section should demonstrate the current status and the expected course of the speech impairment as it relates to the underlying disease/condition.
- State that the prognosis for the development of functional speech is POOR.
EX: He has received treatment for his speech and language disorder in the past, and although he has made improvements in receptive language, his verbal productions have not improved sufficiently to meet his daily communication needs. Considering that Cerebral Palsy is a life-long condition, the prognosis for developing adequate speech for daily needs is poor.

B. Comprehensive Assessment (*Comment on each of the following areas as they pertain to using the device*)

- **1. Language Skills: Receptive, Expressive, Pragmatic - Include in the report:**
- performance on any language assessments completed
- reading level – unable to read, reads at the word level, reads short sentences, functional reading
- auditory comprehension - follows everyday conversation, follows (1,2,3)-step commands, understands questions
- type and level of symbol use by the individual. Does person require pictographic symbols, words, letters, and/or a combination of symbols?
- linguistic capacity to formulate language/messages – can use pictures to put words together; spelling ability
- level of independence in formulating messages using language
- Able to take turns with conversational partner, remains on topic

Example: Patient exhibits an understanding when spoken to, follows everyday conversation, and can follow 2-step commands as his physical ability allows. He responds to his name by looking at the speaker and making eye contact. His expressive skills are extremely limited compared to his receptive abilities. He is currently not able to read or spell, and will need symbols on an SGD. He currently communicates expressively through facial expression, eye gaze and a few non-speech sounds.

2. Cognitive Skills

- Describe the level of cognitive impairment (no impairment to significant cognitive impairment) as it relates to the person's need for and ability to use a SGD. Be sure to describe that the client understands the use of an SGD and show independent use of the device. A very low cognitive level is a red flag for Medicare. Avoid stating the client has a severe cognitive impairment, as Medicare is only interested in cognitive skills as they apply to SGD use, and negative statements will not help your case.

- Describe the person's attention, memory, and problem-solving skills as they relate to using an SGD to enhance or develop daily, functional communication skills. A *good statement to include would be something like, "Although cognitive capacity cannot be formally assessed due to the lack of expressive skills, this client reacts appropriately during interactions with family, peers and support staff"*.
- Example statements: understands cause and effect, follows familiar conversation, retains task instructions, attends to a motivating task for 15 minutes, makes accurate selections identifying items from pictures/icons.
- **The report should state:** The patient possesses the cognitive/linguistic abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate and achieve functional communication goals.

Example: The patient presents with mild impairment in cognitive functioning as it relates to using the speech generating device; however, her attention, memory, and problem-solving skills observed during the evaluation appear to be within functional limits. She understands cause and effect, recognizes picture symbols and follows normal conversation. Based on this, the patient possesses the cognitive/linguistic abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate and achieve functional communication goals.

3. Physical Status

- Describe pertinent considerations regarding motor skills, ambulatory status, positioning and seating. State if client uses a wheelchair or walker. If wheelchair mount is being recommended, it must be used within the home, not just for transport out in the community.

[Funding sources other than Medicare will not care if a wheelchair is used only out in the community.]

- Describe how the person will access the SGD (direct selection, scanning, Headmouse, eye gaze accessory) and the person's access requirements. For eyegaze clients, all other access methods must be ruled out, including use of all extremities for switch use. If ambulatory, document that the person can lift and carry a device of ____ weight, or who is going to transport it if the user cannot.
- If non-ambulatory, and uses wheelchair, state who propels the wheelchair. For an eyegaze client, if pt. uses a joystick to drive a wheelchair, give a reason why this won't work on an SGD. Example: Although pt. is able to operate a power wheelchair with assistance to position hand on to joystick, pt. is unable to consistently perform fine motor movement necessary to use a joystick on an SGD due to uncontrolled movements and spasticity.

[Funding sources other than Medicare will not require this joystick rule-out.]

- **The report should state:** "The patient possesses the physical abilities to effectively use a SGD and required accessories to communicate."

Example: Patient is non-ambulatory and uses a power wheelchair propelled by others. Although this pt. is able to make some gross arm movements, he lacks the muscular coordination necessary for fine motor skills, making direct selection impossible. At this time, the only feasible method of access to an SGD for this pt. is eye movements. He lacks the motor control in his extremities, neck, and head to successfully perform the repetitive movements to operate a switch. This pt. also lacks the coordination to perform the constant up-down-left-right head movements required to run a Headmouse; random head movements constantly interfere with accuracy. He will need physical assistance to meet all his daily life needs and/or to participate in most fine motor activities. The patient possesses the physical abilities to effectively use a SGD and required accessories to communicate.

4. Vision Status

- Describe the communicator's vision relative to using a SGD (along a continuum from normal vision to blindness).
- Include the following elements if/when pertinent to SGD use/selection: acuity, visual tracking, visual field, size of symbols, size of font, number of words or symbols and spacing.
- If there are no special visual needs, you may simply state that vision is corrected with glasses, for example.
- **The report should state:** "The patient possesses the visual abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate functionally."

Example: No history of visual impairment. The patient possesses the visual abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate functionally

5. Hearing Status

- Describe the communicator's hearing relative to communicating with a SGD (along a continuum from normal hearing to deafness).
- Include specifics (if related to SGD use/selection) regarding acuity, localization, understanding of natural speech, understanding speech generated by a SGD.
- If a hearing impairment is present, describe how the SGD needs to provide visual text for the pt. to preview.
- **The report should state:** "The patient possesses the hearing abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate functionally."

Example: No history of hearing impairment. The patient possesses the hearing abilities to effectively use a SGD to communicate functionally

Section 3: Daily Communication Needs

A. Specific Daily Functional Communication Needs

- This section should list the person's daily functional communication (not just medical) needs IN THE HOME, NOT OUT IN THE COMMUNITY:
- Describe communication partners (e.g. spouse, immediate family)
- Describe communication environments (e.g home, doctor's office)
 - Communication to enable person to get basic needs met (e.g., physical needs, personal needs, and social interactions); ability to communicate in emergency situations, directing behavior of caregivers, advocating for him/herself, communicating with family, friends, or clergy using the phone).
 - Communication to enable person to obtain necessary medical care and participate in medical decision-making, (e.g., reporting medical status and complaints, asking questions of medical providers, responding to medical provider's questions, discussing choices for end of life care, communicating with medical providers by phone).
 - Communication to enable person to participate in activities in the home.

Example: Patient needs to communicate in the following environments: home, medical appointments and community. She will need to communicate with her immediate family, extended family, friends, and medical caregivers.

Daily communication activities include expressing wants and needs, expressing feelings and frustrations, asking questions, telling stories, participating in conversations, and directing care.

B. Ability to Meet Communication Needs with Non-SGD Treatment Approaches

This section should document why the patient is unable to fulfill daily functional communication needs using natural speech (or speech aids) and non-SGD treatment approaches.

"(Name)'s daily functional communication needs cannot be met using natural communication methods or low-tech/no-tech AAC techniques.

Speech Therapy - Discuss success of speech therapy (to date and future prognosis) without an SGD – should be poor.

EX 1: (Name) has received speech therapy services for several years. Although gains have been made in reading comprehension and language development, (Name) remains functionally nonverbal.

EX 2: Due to the pt.'s age and life-long speech problems associated with Cerebral Palsy, traditional speech therapy is not indicated.

Sign language – **EX 1:** Sign language is not a viable option for communication due to this pt.'s physical limitations and the inability to use both hands to form signs.

EX 2: Sign language is not a viable option for communication due to this pt.'s very limited sign inventory, most of which are idiosyncratic, and the inability of most communication partners to understand this method of communication.

Writing – **EX 1:** Writing is not a viable communication method due to lack of speech output; it cannot be used over the phone or from another room.

EX 2: Writing cannot be used as a communication method due to pt.'s inability to spell functionally.

EX 3: Writing is not a viable communication method due to this pt.'s severe physical impairments and the inability to hold a pen or pencil.

Communication symbols, communication boards and PECS – These methods limit communication to the symbols provided in a book or board. Managing these symbols and having them readily available to the individual during communication opportunities presents a challenge to independent, easily accessible communication. Navigating through pages of language and/or individual symbol cut outs (usually with the assistance of others) slows down or completely stops the communication process. Picture boards and PECS have been used and not found to be an effective means of communication. These strategies have no voice output. Without voice output an individual cannot independently call for help nor advocate for self. For these reasons, low tech and no tech options were eliminated from consideration.

Section 4: Functional Communication Goals

List 3 – 4 goals for meeting communication needs with SGD:

Examples:

- Will combine two or more symbols to indicate medical status, needs or emotional state. (Do NOT use this for literate users!)
- Will use keyboard page to create novel messages during conversation. (Use this only for literate users.)
- Will tell or retell a story related to a particular event or context with minimal assistance.
- Given a specific message to find, will independently navigate to the correct page.
- Will navigate to a contextually relevant page to access communication.
- Will use humor during social interaction.

- Will spontaneously use greetings and farewells with by incorporating quickfires and my phrases.
- Will select from 1 or more messages to prevent communication breakdown.
- Will express feelings and opinions to family members and caregivers using topic pages.

Section 5: Rationale for Device Selection

This section will explain why certain device features are required. The rationale will relate the person's skills and abilities as described in Section 2.

The report should state: "This individual requires a speech generating device with (list specific features) to meet the person's functional communication goals."

A. General Features of Recommended SGD and Accessories

1. Input Features/Selection Technique

A. Access method (**CHOOSE ONE**) **Must be for current need, not in the future.**

1. Individual can direct select with finger.
 - Touch sensitive screen with adjustment options to improve accuracy
 - Ability to support a keyguard (only choose this if keyguard is necessary).
2. Scanning (requires use of a switch).
 - Mode: visual or auditory scanning.
 - Type of scan: auto-scan or 2-switch step-scanning, linear, row/column, group/row/column, directed (joystick, trackball).
 - Switch: type (pressure, feedback), position, mount
3. Individual requires access via a headmouse.
 - Need to rule out direct selection via touch as well as scanning with a switch.
4. Individual requires access via Eye Gaze.
 - Need to rule out direct selection via touch, scanning with a switch and headmouse, as client must not be able to use any other access method.

B. Encoding Type

- Language organized in categories, single-meaning icons, access to core vocabulary, access to a keyboard, word prediction, access to prestored phrases as well as individual words/letters for novel utterances.

2. Message Characteristics/Features

A. Type of Symbols (choose one)

- Color symbols, access to scene-based language, real pictures for easy access to language.
- Is literate and does not need symbols
- Is literate but could use symbols for quick recognition of stored phrases for improved speed of communication.

B. Storage Capacity

- Ability to produce messages of varied length
- Ability to store a large number of messages for improved speed and access.

C. Vocabulary Expansion and Rate Enhancement

- Vocabulary organized in levels with access to real scenes which reduce cognitive load and provide context. Access to Quickfires, My phrases and common constructions
- Word prediction

3. Output Features

- Synthesized speech
- Voice with intelligible lifelike qualities (gender/age specific); natural-sounding
- Highly salient visual display
- Auditory and visual feedback when pressing a location on the screen.

B. Description of Equipment Used and/or Considered During the Evaluation

Include evidence that the individual was present and actively participated in the assessment process. Discuss assessment outcomes that demonstrate the person's ability to use the SGD and recommended accessories. Describe number of buttons used per page, ability to navigate, i.e., from the main page to the topic pages to select a pre-stored message; ability to type on a keyboard page (literate user), ability to use core words to put simple phrases together (non-literate user), ability to answer simple questions with Quickfires page, etc. Describe how much prompting was needed, since Medicare and many other funding sources look for independent use of the device. Include examples of what the client said with the SGD if possible, i.e., "I like this", "I'm feeling good", "How are you?"

- For cognitively impaired clients, be sure to include statements that they understood use of the SGD, were able to use the SGD independently or with minimal cues; able to handle more than 2 or 3 buttons per page.
- Discuss other access methods tried and why they are unsuccessful. If a HeadMouse or Eye Gaze is needed, please give very specific reasons why direct select with fingers, switch scanning and headtracking were ruled out as an access method, i.e., client does not possess the motor control in any body part to touch on a screen or activate a switch or a Headmouse. If Headmouse is recommended, just rule out direct select and switches.
- Discuss other SGD's used and/or considered and why they were not appropriate for this user. It is not necessary to **try** each device: state why it was considered and **WHY** it was ruled out without a trial. It's a good idea to rule out at least 2 other devices, for example:
 - The Indi 7 was ruled out because the screen was too small for this client to make accurate selections.
 - The SC tablet was considered and ruled out because it does not have Gorilla glass over the screen and is therefore not as durable.
 - Digitized speech, recordable devices (E2506) were considered but not trialed because a recordable device does not allow client the breadth of expression/ability to create novel messages she requires to convey information about her daily needs, nor would she be able to convey important medical/safety information to her family or caregivers.
 - Text-to-speech devices in the E2508 category were ruled out as they require memorization of hundreds of letter codes for stored messages, which would be an unnecessary cognitive load.

The report MUST state: "Based on the above assessment, it has been determined that the Tobii Dynavox (name of device) is the most appropriate communication device for (Patient Name)".

D. SGD and Accessories Recommended

List the specific SGD FIRST, and then accessories. Include **medical justification** as to why this SGD and **specifically the accessories** being requested will enable the individual to achieve functional communication goals, as stated earlier in the report. Include features of the SGD that make it the best choice.

EX. for non-literate user: The Tobii Dynavox I-13 is the recommended SGD for various reasons. First, it allows for alternative access method via eye gaze which is necessary due to this client's physical limitations/ lack of motor control. It provides a smaller screen size than the I-16 which would be prohibitive of patient's participation with family and other communication partners. The I-13 has a comprehensive language system of software which includes use of icons, pre-programmed language, as well as message generation via color-coded core vocabulary, and voice output with synthesized speech. The device provides easy navigation and includes core words, quick phrases and topics to allow this client to easily initiate and participate in communication interactions. Messages specific to this client's everyday needs can be created and added to this device for greater personalization. The I-13 features a partner window which allows for clear communication even in a noisy environment where the speaker volume may be drowned out. The I-13 supports Windows Hello which allows the client to use facial recognition to log into the device after a restart providing increased security for the user and allowing greater independence when using the device. The Tobii I-13 and eye gaze accessory will provide a consistent and effective means for this client to express personal and medical needs, participate in ADLs, and maintain social relationships.

Example statements for accessories:

Mounting System – to position the SGD in the optimal place for effective visual and physical access of the device.

(List specific type of mount, i.e., wheelchair mount, floor stand or universal mount. For universal mount, state that it is needed to position the device effectively in multiple positions throughout the home for access to wheelchair, alternative seating such as recliner or sofa, as well as when in bed.

Keyguard – (only include if keyguard is being recommended) to reduce target errors due to fine motor problems.

Headmouse or Headtracker – (only include if Headmouse is being recommended) – This is necessary because (Name) does not have the motor control to use direct select or switches but has good head movement for access method.

Eye Gaze Accessory - (only include if Eyegaze is being recommended) – This will allow (Name) to access the SGD using no body movements other than the pupils of the eyes. (Name) has no well controlled body parts to use other access methods. There are no other options of access other than the Eye Gaze. This pt. does not have head control to access a Headmouse accurately or use scanning for switch access.

NOTE: Do NOT list a carry case – it is included with every device.

E. Patient and Family Support of SGD

- Discuss participation of the family/caregiver/advocate and state that they agree to the selected SGD and will support the equipment and its use for daily communication.

F. Physician Involvement Statement

- **The report should state:**

This report was forwarded to the treating physician. The physician was asked to write a prescription for the recommended equipment.

Section 6: Treatment Plan

Address all functional communication goals previously stated for the beneficiary and identify the plan for achieving these goals using the SGD and accessories.

- Frequency and duration of SLP treatment - __x/week for __weeks to address the above goals.

Ex. #1: (The SLP is recommending that the client receive Speech and Language Therapy after getting an SGD.)

Upon receipt of SGD, it is recommended that the patient receive 45 minutes of individual therapy and one hour of group therapy weekly for 8 weeks (total 16 sessions) to address the above goals. An additional two hours of training are recommended to train caregivers to program the device.

Ex. #2: (The SLP is recommending that the client receive Speech and Language Therapy after getting an SGD, but the client will not be returning to the evaluating SLP and should be referred for home health or out-pt. therapy.)

This client will not be returning to the evaluating SLP; the family should ask the prescribing physician to order Speech/Language Therapy for the client through home health or out-pt. resources. It is recommended that this Client receive individual therapy 1 x week for 4 weeks to address goals.

Ex. #3: (The Client is cognitively intact, literate and has the skills to learn to use the SGD without the services of an SLP.)

This client has the cognitive and technical skills to use the SGD without the services of an SLP, so further SLP treatment is not recommended, but is available upon request. He has prior computer experience, and his (name the support person) will be available for setting up the eyegaze accessory and providing programming assistance. The client/family has access to written instructions, and online and phone support from the manufacturer. Client's physician has been advised of these goals and is in concurrence with this treatment plan.

Section 7: SLP Assurance of Financial Independence and Signature

The SLP performing this evaluation is not an employee of and does not have a financial relationship with the supplier of any SGD.

- SLP signature
- Evaluating SLP's name
- ASHA Certification Number
- State License Number