

BSC8.02	Speech Therapy		
Original Policy Date:	January 11, 2008	Effective Date:	April 1, 2025
Section:	2.0 Medicine	Page:	Page 1 of 10

Policy Statement

Rehabilitative Speech Therapy

- I. Rehabilitative speech therapy may be considered **medically necessary** when **all** of the following are met:
 - A. Diagnosis is made of **any** of the following:
 1. Communication impairment
 2. Swallowing disorder
 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder
 4. Abnormal delay in speech development
 5. Marked gender incongruence or Gender dysphoria for voice retraining (hormonal therapy for 1-2 years is recommended prior to Female to Male (FtM); hormonal therapy is not needed prior to retraining for Male to Female (MtF) as it is unlikely to be of benefit)
 - B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy
 - C. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by **one** of the following:
 1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean
 2. If the child's clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required
 3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study
 4. Marked gender incongruence or DSM V diagnosis of gender dysphoria
 - D. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan
- II. Speech therapy is considered **not medically necessary** when therapeutic goals of the treatment plan have been achieved or when no further functional progress is expected to occur.

Habilitative Speech Therapy

- III. Habilitative speech therapy may be considered **medically necessary** when **all** of the following are met:
 - A. Diagnosis is made of **any** of the following:
 1. Communication impairment
 2. Swallowing disorder
 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder
 4. Abnormal delay in speech development
 - B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy
 - C. There is a formal speech therapy evaluation with specific and functional diagnosis-related goals that can be objectively measured

- D. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by **one** of the following:
 - 1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean
 - 2. If the child's clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required
 - 3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study
 - E. There is a written expectation that the therapy will maintain function that is present or will assist in the development of new capabilities, and that discontinuation of therapy will result in loss of capability
 - F. Specific, effective, and reasonable treatment is provided for the diagnosis and physical condition of the individual
 - G. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan
 - H. Treatment is resulting in documented improvement, maintenance of capabilities or development of new functions, and is reassessed every six months for continued medical necessity
- IV. Habilitative speech therapy is considered **not medically necessary** for **any** of the following:
- A. Member achieves intended normal functioning
 - B. Documentation fails to show at least maintenance of original or acquired function
 - C. Member can no longer participate in minimal therapy or declines to do so

NOTE: Refer to [Appendix A](#) to see the policy statement changes (if any) from the previous version.

Policy Guidelines

This policy includes criteria for coverage approval for both **rehabilitative** speech therapy and **habilitative** speech therapy.

Note: For speech therapy related to gender reassignment, see Blue Shield of California Medical Policy: Gender Affirmation Surgery

Rehabilitative Services

Rehabilitative services are defined as specialized treatments provided to individuals who suffer from either temporary or permanent loss of physical functions due to trauma, illness, congenital or developmental anomalies, therapeutic interventions, or loss of a body part, and which are designed to improve or restore the ability to perform Activities of Daily Living. These therapeutic services must always have defined goals which can be reached in a reasonable period of time. These services may include physical and occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and other services for people with disabilities in a variety of inpatient or outpatient settings, or both.

Habilitative services

Habilitative services are defined by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners as "health care services that help a person keep, learn or improve skills and functioning for daily living."

Habilitative services are intended to maintain, develop or improve skills needed to perform activities of daily living (ADLs) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) which have not (but normally would have) developed or which are at risk of being lost as a result of illness, injury, loss of a body part, or congenital abnormality. Examples include therapy for a child who is not walking at the expected age.

Activities of Daily Living

According to the definition provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "activities of daily living" are defined as:

"...activities related to personal care. They include bathing or showering, dressing, getting in and out of bed or a chair, walking, using the toilet, and eating. If a sample person has difficulty performing an activity by himself/herself and without special equipment, or does not perform the activity at all because of health problems, the person is deemed to have a limitation in that activity. The limitation may be temporary or chronic at the time of the survey."

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living

According to the definition provided by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "instrumental activities of daily living" are defined as:

"...activities related to independent living. They include preparing meals, managing money, shopping for groceries or personal items, performing light or heavy housework, and using a telephone. If a sample person has any difficulty performing an activity by himself/herself, or does not perform the activity at all, because of health problems, the person is deemed to have a limitation in that activity. The limitation may be temporary or chronic at the time of the survey."

Coding

See the [Codes table](#) for details.

Description

Speech therapy is the treatment of communication impairment, including delay in speech development, and swallowing disorder. Speech therapy services facilitate the development of human communication and swallowing through assessment, diagnosis, habilitation, and rehabilitation.

Related Policies

- Gender Affirmation Surgery
- Sensory Integration Therapy and Auditory Integration Therapy

Benefit Application

Benefit determinations should be based in all cases on the applicable contract language. To the extent there are any conflicts between these guidelines and the contract language, the contract language will control. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

Some state or federal mandates (e.g., Federal Employee Program [FEP]) prohibits plans from denying Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved technologies as investigational. In these instances, plans may have to consider the coverage eligibility of FDA-approved technologies on the basis of medical necessity alone.

Regulatory Status

State:

Per California Senate Bill (SB) 43 (Health and Safety Code 1367.005 and Insurance Code Section 10112.27), "habilitative services" are defined as health care services and devices that help a person keep, learn, or improve skills and functioning for Activities of Daily Living or Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (see Policy Guidelines section). These include common human skills and function that

never or only marginally developed because of congenital defect, trauma, illness, therapeutic intervention, or loss of a body part, or skills and functions that are in peril of loss for these reasons. Also, these disabilities are so profound that therapeutic goal setting is not possible and the time to achievement of full or potential function is not predictable.

Rationale

- N/A

References

1. California Health and Safety Code Section 1367.005. 2017. Accessed June 24, 2024 from http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=1367.005.&lawCode=HSC.
2. California Insurance Code Section 10112.27. 2017. Accessed June 24, 2024 from http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=10112.27.&lawCode=INS.

Documentation for Clinical Review

Please provide the following documentation:

- History and physical and/or consultation notes including:
 - Reason for speech therapy including documentation of the issue needing treatment
 - Diagnoses related to the need for speech therapy
 - Any applicable test results related to the need for speech therapy
- Provider prescription for speech therapy
- Standardized test score
- Treatment plan including:
 - Frequency and duration of treatment (e.g., 2 times per week for 6 months)
 - Functional, measurable, objective time-bound long- and short-term goals
 - Specific treatment techniques and/or activities to be used in treatment sessions

Coding

This Policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Benefits may vary according to product design; therefore, contract language should be reviewed before applying the terms of the Policy.

The following codes are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement policy. Policy Statements are intended to provide member coverage information and may include the use of some codes for clarity. The Policy Guidelines section may also provide additional information for how to interpret the Policy Statements and to provide coding guidance in some cases.

Type	Code	Description
CPT [®]	92507	Treatment of speech, language, voice, communication, and/or auditory processing disorder; individual
	92508	Treatment of speech, language, voice, communication, and/or auditory processing disorder; group, 2 or more individuals
	92521	Evaluation of speech fluency (e.g., stuttering, cluttering)

Type	Code	Description
	92522	Evaluation of speech sound production (e.g., articulation, phonological process, apraxia, dysarthria)
	92523	Evaluation of speech sound production (e.g., articulation, phonological process, apraxia, dysarthria); with evaluation of language comprehension and expression (e.g., receptive and expressive language)
	92524	Behavioral and qualitative analysis of voice and resonance
	92526	Treatment of swallowing dysfunction and/or oral function for feeding
	92610	Evaluation of oral and pharyngeal swallowing function
HCPCS	G0153	Services performed by a qualified speech-language pathologist in the home health or hospice setting, each 15 minutes
	G0161	Services performed by a qualified speech-language pathologist, in the home health setting, in the establishment or delivery of a safe and effective speech-language pathology maintenance program, each 15 minutes
	S9128	Speech therapy, in the home, per diem
	S9152	Speech therapy, re-evaluation

Policy History

This section provides a chronological history of the activities, updates and changes that have occurred with this Medical Policy.

Effective Date	Action
01/11/2008	New Policy
05/08/2008	Policy Revision Added Prior Authorization Requirement for specific procedures
10/28/2009	Coding Update
12/18/2009	Criteria Revised
01/12/2010	Criteria Revised
04/18/2011	Coding Update
02/03/2012	Policy expired
06/30/2015	Policy renewed and revised Policy revision with position change
02/01/2016	Policy statement clarification
06/01/2016	Policy revision without position change
06/01/2017	Policy revision without position change
12/01/2017	Policy revision without position change
07/01/2018	Policy revision without position change
06/01/2019	Policy revision without position change
06/01/2020	Annual review. No change to policy statement. Policy guidelines updated.
06/01/2021	Annual review. Policy statement updated.
07/01/2022	Annual review. No change to policy statement.
07/01/2023	Annual review. Policy statement updated.
07/01/2024	Annual review. Policy statement updated.
04/01/2025	Administrative Review.

Definitions of Decision Determinations

Medically Necessary: Services that are Medically Necessary include only those which have been established as safe and effective, are furnished under generally accepted professional standards to

treat illness, injury or medical condition, and which, as determined by Blue Shield, are: (a) consistent with Blue Shield medical policy; (b) consistent with the symptoms or diagnosis; (c) not furnished primarily for the convenience of the patient, the attending Physician or other provider; (d) furnished at the most appropriate level which can be provided safely and effectively to the patient; and (e) not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of the Member's illness, injury, or disease.

Investigational/Experimental: A treatment, procedure, or drug is investigational when it has not been recognized as safe and effective for use in treating the particular condition in accordance with generally accepted professional medical standards. This includes services where approval by the federal or state governmental is required prior to use, but has not yet been granted.

Split Evaluation: Blue Shield of California/Blue Shield of California Life & Health Insurance Company (Blue Shield) policy review can result in a split evaluation, where a treatment, procedure, or drug will be considered to be investigational for certain indications or conditions, but will be deemed safe and effective for other indications or conditions, and therefore potentially medically necessary in those instances.

Prior Authorization Requirements and Feedback (as applicable to your plan)

Within five days before the actual date of service, the provider must confirm with Blue Shield that the member's health plan coverage is still in effect. Blue Shield reserves the right to revoke an authorization prior to services being rendered based on cancellation of the member's eligibility. Final determination of benefits will be made after review of the claim for limitations or exclusions.

Questions regarding the applicability of this policy should be directed to the Prior Authorization Department at (800) 541-6652, or the Transplant Case Management Department at (800) 637-2066 ext. 3507708 or visit the provider portal at www.blueshieldca.com/provider.

We are interested in receiving feedback relative to developing, adopting, and reviewing criteria for medical policy. Any licensed practitioner who is contracted with Blue Shield of California or Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan is welcome to provide comments, suggestions, or concerns. Our internal policy committees will receive and take your comments into consideration.

For utilization and medical policy feedback, please send comments to: MedPolicy@blueshieldca.com

Disclaimer: This medical policy is a guide in evaluating the medical necessity of a particular service or treatment. Blue Shield of California may consider published peer-reviewed scientific literature, national guidelines, and local standards of practice in developing its medical policy. Federal and state law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions, take precedence over medical policy and must be considered first in determining covered services. Member contracts may differ in their benefits. Blue Shield reserves the right to review and update policies as appropriate.

Appendix A

POLICY STATEMENT	
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<p>Speech Therapy BSC8.02</p> <p>Policy Statement: This policy includes criteria for coverage approval for both rehabilitative speech therapy and habilitative speech therapy.</p> <p>Rehabilitative Speech Therapy Rehabilitative services are defined as specialized treatments provided to individuals who suffer from either temporary or permanent loss of physical functions due to trauma, illness, congenital or developmental anomalies, therapeutic interventions, or loss of a body part, and which are designed to improve or restore the ability to perform Activities of Daily Living (see Policy Guidelines section). These therapeutic services must always have defined goals which can be reached in a reasonable period of time. These services may include physical and occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and other services for people with disabilities in a variety of inpatient or outpatient settings, or both.</p> <p>I. Rehabilitative speech therapy may be considered medically necessary when all of the following are met:</p> <p>A. Diagnosis is made of any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication impairment 2. Swallowing disorder 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder 4. Abnormal delay in speech development 5. Marked gender incongruence or Gender dysphoria for voice retraining (hormonal therapy for 1-2 years is recommended prior to Female to Male (FtM); hormonal therapy is not needed prior to retraining for Male to Female (MtF) as it is unlikely to be of benefit) <p>B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy</p> <p>C. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by one of the following:</p>	<p>Speech Therapy BSC8.02</p> <p>Policy Statement:</p> <p>Rehabilitative Speech Therapy</p> <p>I. Rehabilitative speech therapy may be considered medically necessary when all of the following are met:</p> <p>A. Diagnosis is made of any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication impairment 2. Swallowing disorder 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder 4. Abnormal delay in speech development 5. Marked gender incongruence or Gender dysphoria for voice retraining (hormonal therapy for 1-2 years is recommended prior to Female to Male (FtM); hormonal therapy is not needed prior to retraining for Male to Female (MtF) as it is unlikely to be of benefit) <p>B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy</p> <p>C. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by one of the following:</p>

POLICY STATEMENT

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<p>1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean</p> <p>2. If the child’s clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required</p> <p>3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study</p> <p>4. Marked gender incongruence or DSM V diagnosis of gender dysphoria</p> <p>D. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan</p> <p>II. Speech therapy is considered not medically necessary when therapeutic goals of the treatment plan have been achieved or when no further functional progress is expected to occur.</p>	<p>1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean</p> <p>2. If the child’s clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required</p> <p>3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study</p> <p>4. Marked gender incongruence or DSM V diagnosis of gender dysphoria</p> <p>D. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan</p> <p>II. Speech therapy is considered not medically necessary when therapeutic goals of the treatment plan have been achieved or when no further functional progress is expected to occur.</p>
<p>Habilitative Speech Therapy</p> <p>III. Habilitative speech therapy may be considered medically necessary when all of the following are met:</p> <p>A. Diagnosis is made of any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication impairment 2. Swallowing disorder 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder 4. Abnormal delay in speech development <p>B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy</p>	<p>Habilitative Speech Therapy</p> <p>III. Habilitative speech therapy may be considered medically necessary when all of the following are met:</p> <p>A. Diagnosis is made of any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication impairment 2. Swallowing disorder 3. Expressive or receptive language disorder 4. Abnormal delay in speech development <p>B. A provider prescription or referral is provided documenting the medical necessity for speech therapy</p>

POLICY STATEMENT

BEFORE Red font: Verbiage removed	AFTER
<p>C. There is a formal speech therapy evaluation with specific and functional diagnosis-related goals that can be objectively measured</p> <p>D. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean 2. If the child’s clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required 3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study <p>E. There is a written expectation that the therapy will maintain function that is present or will assist in the development of new capabilities, and that discontinuation of therapy will result in loss of capability</p> <p>F. Specific, effective, and reasonable treatment is provided for the diagnosis and physical condition of the individual</p> <p>G. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan</p> <p>H. Treatment is resulting in documented improvement, maintenance of capabilities or development of new functions, and is reassessed every six months for continued medical necessity</p> <p>IV. Habilitative speech therapy is considered not medically necessary for any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Member achieves intended normal functioning 	<p>C. There is a formal speech therapy evaluation with specific and functional diagnosis-related goals that can be objectively measured</p> <p>D. Clinical documentation is provided of speech or swallowing impairment, as evidenced by one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Below-average scores on standardized objective testing, indicative of a moderate-significant deficit generally defined as a score below 85 (for most standardized tests with average score of 100) or one standard deviation below the mean 2. If the child’s clinical condition precludes reliable objective standardized testing, as judged by a speech-language pathologist, then a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist that moderate-significant deficit is present and treatment is medically necessary, is required 3. Clinical evidence of impaired swallowing – a professional evaluation by a speech-language pathologist or results of a swallowing study <p>E. There is a written expectation that the therapy will maintain function that is present or will assist in the development of new capabilities, and that discontinuation of therapy will result in loss of capability</p> <p>F. Specific, effective, and reasonable treatment is provided for the diagnosis and physical condition of the individual</p> <p>G. Services are delivered by a licensed speech-language pathologist or other appropriately licensed or certified health care provider and are based on a written treatment plan</p> <p>H. Treatment is resulting in documented improvement, maintenance of capabilities or development of new functions, and is reassessed every six months for continued medical necessity</p> <p>IV. Habilitative speech therapy is considered not medically necessary for any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Member achieves intended normal functioning

POLICY STATEMENT

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B. Documentation fails to show at least maintenance of original or acquired function C. Member can no longer participate in minimal therapy or declines to do so	B. Documentation fails to show at least maintenance of original or acquired function C. Member can no longer participate in minimal therapy or declines to do so