

Eli's Rehab Report

News Briefs: Speech-Language: Premera Blue Cross Says OK to SGDs

Good news for speech-language pathologists using private health plan Premera Blue Cross: This payer has reversed its policy that excluded coverage of speech-generating devices (SGDs) and other augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices for autism-related speech-language disorders, according to a news e-mail from the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA).

Before, Premera would only cover SGDs and AACs as "medically necessary," if SLPs used them to treat speech-language impairments that were not "primarily" due to autism or other pervasive developmental disorders. That was based on Premera's Corporate Medical Policy (CP.MP.PR.1.01.502), last updated Oct. 9, 2007, that considered SGDs and AACs devices for autism "investigational," ASHA said in its announcement.

ASHA links this policy change to its recent advocacy actions, reporting that it "urged Premera Blue Cross to reconsider its policy in light of supportive literature findings as well as current national and local practice standards" that encourage SLPs to use SGDs and AAC devices to treat autism-related speech-language disorders.

New way: Premera's policy change will offer coverage under the same criteria for SGDs and AAC devices to treat speech-language disorders, regardless of whether they are related to autism or of other etiologies, ASHA said in its message.

Don't miss: Want to hear more about AACs? Tune in to the Eli-sponsored audioconference "How to Establish Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Options in the Healthcare Setting" on June 25. Sign up at http://www.audioeducator.com/industry_conference.php?id=1009.