

ENSURE MEDICARE BENEFICIARY ACCESS TO SPEECH-GENERATING DEVICES

ACTION

Request that your members of Congress cosponsor the Steve Gleason Enduring Voices Act of 2017 (H.R. 2465/S. 1132), legislation that builds on the Steve Gleason Act of 2015 to permanently fix Medicare's policy that limits access to speech-generating devices (SGD).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

The Steve Gleason Act of 2015 removed SGDs from capped rental requirements for durable medical equipment under Medicare for three years. Prior to the legislation, in accordance with Medicare rules, if an SGD user resided in a nursing home, hospice, or hospital, Medicare payment for the SGD stopped. Many of these facilities did not and could not supply beneficiaries with a uniquely configured SGD substitute.

Ongoing and permanent access to Medicare coverage of SGDs will ensure individuals who medically qualify for an SGD to continue to use their personalized devices. The Steve Gleason Act of 2015 is expected to expire on January 1, 2019. It is important to pass this important legislation.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY?

- SGDs are highly customized electronic augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems, which are used to supplement or replace speech, enabling individuals with functional communication impairments to verbally communicate their needs.
- Individuals with Parkinson's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) are the most common users of these devices.
- Only speech-language pathologists may recommend SGDs for Medicare beneficiaries based upon a formal written evaluation.
- In 2013, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services reclassified SGDs based on their review and interpretation of the Social Security Act. As a result, these devices, which were for years permitted to be purchased by the beneficiary, were placed under a capped rental requirement.
- Capped rental requires the patient to rent an SGD over a 13-month period before owning a device.
- It is difficult to comprehend this policy since these devices are customized and most SGD recipients, due to their chronic and degenerative conditions, continue to have severe speech deficits well beyond the 13-month timeframe.

ASHA CONTACT:

Ingrida Lusic, Director of Federal and Political Advocacy
202-624-5951 • ilusic@asha.org
takeaction.asha.org