

2015 National CRT Conference Message to Congress

Help Protect People with Disabilities Access to Complex Rehab Technology

We're here in Washington the week of April 20, 2015 to ask Congress to help protect access to Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) for people with disabilities. Complex Rehab Technology products include specialized wheelchairs, seating systems, and other adaptive equipment used by people with high level disabilities such as ALS, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury. This specialized equipment is provided through a clinical team and requires evaluation, configuration, and fitting to meet an individual's unique medical needs and maximize their function and independence. It also must be supported with ongoing maintenance and repair.

Unfortunately the ability for the small population of people with disabilities to access this specialized technology and supporting services is UNDER ATTACK. We need Congress' help on two critical issues:

Issue 1- Stop Application of Competitive Bid Pricing to Complex Rehab Wheelchair Accessories

ISSUE: CMS plans to inappropriately apply competitive bid pricing to Complex Rehab wheelchair accessories beginning in 2016. This violates 2008 federal legislation (MIPPA) and subsequent CMS policy that excluded individually configured Complex Rehab wheelchairs and accessories from competitive bidding. Accessories are KEY components (such as seat/back cushions, recline/tilt systems, specialty controls, etc.) of a Complex Rehab wheelchair. This inappropriate application would eliminate access as payment rates would drop 20% to 50% and the negative impact would extend WELL BEYOND Medicare beneficiaries to also hurt people with disabilities in Medicaid and private insurance programs. Thankfully on April 20th the House of Representatives sent a 100 signature BIPARTISAN letter led by Representatives Bill Johnson (R-OH) and Diana DeGette (D-CO) to CMS requesting it rescind this change.

ASK: Now that the House letter has been sent, we need Congress to push CMS to RESCIND its plan to apply competitive bid pricing to Complex Rehab wheelchair accessories. If CMS does not honor the letter's request (by 5/31) we will need Congress to pursue legislation to address the issue.

Issue 2- Co-Sponsor CRT Separate Benefit Category Legislation and Pass It This Year

ISSUE: The "Ensuring Access to Quality Complex Rehabilitation Technology Act" has been reintroduced this session as HR-1516 and S-1013 by Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Joe Crowley (D-NY) and Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY). The bill will create a separate category for CRT within the Medicare DME benefit just like the one that exists for Orthotics and Prosthetics (braces and artificial limbs) and provide needed coverage, coding, and safeguard improvements focused on the needs of people with disabilities. Problems continue to grow because these specialized CRT items are grouped within Medicare's "standard" DME category. The legislation ended last year with strong BIPARTISAN support --- 168 members in the House and 22 members in the Senate signed on. Over 50 national consumer/clinical organizations have also signed on in support.

ASK: Please sign on as a co-sponsor to House bill HR-1516 or Senate bill S-1013 and help get it passed this year.

For more information about Complex Rehab Technology visit www.access2crt.org