

COMPLEX REHAB TECHNOLOGY

REQUESTS TO CONGRESS - SEPTEMBER 2021



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CRT Stakeholder Requests to Congress - September 2021

Please Take Actions Needed to Protect Access for People with Disabilities

We need Congress to help ensure continued access to Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) for people with disabilities. CRT products include medically necessary specialized wheelchairs, seating systems, and other adaptive equipment used by individuals with significant disabilities such as ALS, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury. An introductory video on the types of CRT and the provision process can be found at www.access2crt.org.

CRT is individually configured to meet the unique medical needs of people with disabilities, to maximize their independence, and to minimize their health care costs. It is provided through a clinical team model and labor-intensive process that includes clinical evaluation, technology assessment, equipment simulation, assembly/configuration, delivery, fitting, programming, and training. Once delivered, it must be supported with ongoing adjustment, programming, maintenance, and repair.

Adequate access to CRT is critical to providing greater independence as well as reducing medical interventions and related health care costs. Members of Congress are asked to take the following actions to improve and protect the ability of those with disabilities to access the specialized CRT products and supporting services they depend on for their independence and health.

ASK 1: Sign on to the Congressional letter to CMS Administrator Brooks-LaSure asking CMS to move forward with the pending coverage request for power seat elevation and standing systems on CRT power wheelchairs. Medicare currently DOES NOT cover funding of power seat elevation and power standing systems used with CRT power wheelchairs. Evidence shows these CRT systems provide significant medical benefits and enable people with disabilities to be much more independent in their home and community settings. On September 15, 2020, a national coalition of disability/consumer/health organizations (the ITEM Coalition) submitted a formal request to CMS to establish coverage in the Medicare program. Unfortunately, the review of the coverage request has not formally progressed and it needs to move forward.

ASK 2: Federal financial assistance is needed so it does not become cost prohibitive for CRT companies to continue to provide the equipment and services needed by people with disabilities. CRT providers and manufacturers have incurred significant operating challenges and increased expenses from the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, CRT providers do not have the ability to charge more to cover the increased costs as they are limited by Medicare, Medicaid, and other third-party payer fee schedules. The increases include personal protective equipment, new remote technology, increased payroll costs, increased time required to provide services, increased material/product costs, shipping surcharges, delivery delays, and more. These challenges and increases are very significant and relief must be provided. A disruption in access to CRT will lead to adverse health outcomes and increased overall costs of care.

ASK 3: Recognize the benefits of unique CRT telehealth flexibilities put in place during the Public Health Emergency and ensure they continue post-PHE to protect patient access. The ability for OTs and PTs to provide CRT related telehealth services has been extremely beneficial for people with disabilities, but will end when the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) expires. This telehealth option must be made permanent so OTs and PTs can, when the situation requires, participate remotely for CRT evaluations, fittings, and training when an in-person visit is not possible due to medical risks, transportation barriers, lack of experienced clinicians in the community, and other factors. Rather than allowing these proven flexibilities to expire, Congress and the Biden Administration should make these CRT telehealth policies permanent.

For additional information on Complex Rehab Technology visit www.ncart.us.