



# UnitedHealthcare Community Plan (UHCCP)

Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)  
Member Guide

January 1, 2021



## **This guide will help the member, family and caregivers understand:**

1. How the AAC process works.
2. How to work with the health plan.
3. How to work with the AAC providers.

## **What is an AAC System?**

An AAC system provides a member with a different or added ways to tell their wants, needs, and thoughts. The AAC system should be used by the member in all settings (home, school, community).

## **How to start the AAC process?**

1. Member receives from their physician a prescription/referral for an AAC assessment by a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). This prescription is good for 12 months.
2. Member may contact the DDD Support Coordinator, UHCCP's member services, and UHCCP DD liaisons to get contact information for an in-network UHCCP licensed and registered SLP. Or the member can do a provider search using UHCCP's member website and use the Provider Lookup feature.
3. Once the member chooses an SLP, the member calls the SLP to schedule an assessment.
4. The assessment requires a Prior-Authorization (PA). The SLP will send to UHCCP the member's ISP, IEP, therapy progress notes, and other documentation to support the need for an assessment
5. Per the UHCCP member handbook, a specialty appointment is to be scheduled within 45 days of when the member calls and asks for the assessment.
6. Once UHCCP receives the PA, a decision must be made within 14 days.
7. If the assessment is approved, the SLP will contact the member to schedule the assessment.
8. If the assessment is not approved, the member will get a Notice of Adverse Determination (NOA) letter in the mail.

## **What happens during the AAC assessment?**

1. Prior to the assessment, the SLP will determine the appropriate AAC device(s) for the member to try during the assessment visit.



2. The SLP will bring to the assessment up to three AAC devices for the member to try during the visit. Other therapy providers besides the SLP may also contribute to the assessment.
3. During the assessment, a family may choose to trial one of the AAC devices up to 30 days. During the trial period, the SLP will help make sure that the device is meeting the member's needs.
4. After an AAC device has been trialed and the treatment team, member and family agree on the AAC device, the SLP will send the assessment report to the referring physician for signature.

### **What happens after the AAC assessment?**

1. Once the physician signs off on the recommended AAC device, the SLP will submit a PA to UHCCP for the device. The submission of the PA for device will take place within 20 days from the AAC assessment.
2. The PA will include supporting documentation from the assessment, expected training hours, and the list of the necessary accessories for the proper use of the AAC system.
3. Once UHCCP receives the PA, a decision must be made within 14 days.
4. If the AAC device, training and accessories are approved, the order will be sent to the AAC device manufacturer.
5. If the AAC device is not approved, the member will get a Notice of Adverse Determination (NOA) letter in the mail.

### **How will member receive the device?**

1. The AAC device will be mailed directly to the member's home.
2. Once the member receives the AAC device, the member should contact the SLP to schedule training of the AAC device.
3. UHCCP expects the first training to be completed no later than 90 days from when the AAC device was approved by the health plan.

### **What accessories may come with an AAC system?**

1. Devices that allows the selection of letters, words, or symbols using things like optical head pointers, joysticks, and AAC scanning devices.



2. Switches and buttons may be considered for members with limited gross motor and head control.
3. Head control access devices, such as laser or infrared pointers, may be considered for members with limited hand control and good head control.
4. Applicable software;
5. Device case;
6. Batteries;
7. Battery charger;
8. Power supplies;
9. Interface cables;
10. Interconnects;
11. Sensors;
12. Moisture guard;
13. A/C or other electrical adapters;
14. Adequate memory for system expansion within a 3-year time frame;
15. Mounting systems, when medically necessary, is equipment used to place the AAC system, switches, and devices within reach of the member. Mounting systems may be considered for reimbursement when used to attach an AAC device to a wheelchair or table; and
16. Any extended warranty by the device manufacturer.

### **What is not included with the AAC system?**

Laptop or desktop computers, PDAs, or other devices that are not dedicated AAC device systems may not be covered because they do not meet the definition of DME.

Items that are not necessary to run the device and are unrelated to the AAC device system components are not covered. These items include, but are not limited to:



1. Printer
2. Wireless Internet router or other ways to get to the internet

### **What if the AAC system needs a repair?**

1. All repairs require PA by UHCCP.
2. DDD will allow UHCCP to cover one device repair every 12 months due to normal wear and tear unless the device is under warranty.
3. The member can work with the DDD Support Coordinator , the original treating SLP or UHCCP to confirm if the device is under warranty.
4. UHCCP will assist member and DDD Support Coordinator in returning device if under warranty.
5. UHCCP will not cover the replacement of applications that have been deleted or cannot be accessed due to loss of username and password.

### **What if the member needs an AAC replacement?**

The device and accessories are expected to last up to 36 months.

If replacement is needed, the member must reach out to their physician to get a prescription/referral to begin the assessment process as described earlier in the guide under, “How to begin the process?”. The DDD Support Coordinator is available to support the process.

The replacement of an AAC system or its components will be considered in the following circumstances:

1. When loss or irreparable damage has occurred.
2. It has been 3 years since the first prescription, and the AAC system is no longer functional.
3. There is a change in the member’s condition that affects the use of the current AAC system.
4. The current AAC system is not meeting the member’s needs despite adequate training.



5. There is documentation, from the manufacturer, that the SGD can no longer be repaired.
6. Accessories purchased originally by DDD or UHCCP become damaged or worn.
7. The AAC system has been lost or stolen, and the following documentation is submitted:
  - A police report, if stolen.
  - A “Find My iPad” report from Apple (iPad only).

### **What if a re-assessment or changes to the device are needed?**

A re-assessment and modification may be allowed in the following circumstances:

1. At least 3 months of training is provided.
2. There is a change in the member’s medical condition.
3. The member is not meeting or exceeding current goals with the current AAC system.

A PA for a re-assessment and modification may be required. The member should contact the original treating SLP who provided the device and training. The DDD Support Coordinator may help in contacting the original SLP.

### **What if school-based therapy is involved?**

UHCCP does not provide school-based therapy services. UHCCP will accept an AAC assessment completed by the schools SLP for consideration in the PA process for a device provided by the health plan. The member should work with the DDD Support Coordinator to get a copy of the school’s AAC assessment to provide to UHCCP.

