

To: AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Providers

Date: December 23, 2021

Subject: Informational Bulletin 21-29: Cochlear Implant Policy

Informational Bulletins that summarize policies and/or procedures are intended for quick reference and are accurate on the date they are issued.

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana shall cover unilateral or bilateral cochlear implants when deemed medically necessary for the treatment of severe-to-profound, bilateral sensorineural hearing loss in enrollees under 21 years of age. Implants must be used in accordance with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines.

Eligibility Criteria

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana requires a multi-disciplinary implant team to collaborate on determining eligibility and providing care that includes, at minimum: a fellowship-trained pediatric otolaryngologist or fellowship-trained otologist, an audiologist, and a speech-language pathologist.

An audiological evaluation must find:

- Severe-to-profound hearing loss determined through the use of an age-appropriate combination of behavioral and physiological measures; and
- Limited or no functional benefit achieved after a sufficient trial of hearing aid amplification.

A medical evaluation must include:

- Medical history;
- Physical examination verifying the candidate has intact tympanic membrane(s), is free of active ear disease, and has no contraindication for surgery under general anesthesia;
- Verification of receipt of all recommended immunizations;

- Verification of accessible cochlear anatomy that is suitable to implantation, as confirmed by imaging studies (computed tomography (CT) and/or magnetic resonance imagery (MRI)), when necessary; and
- Verification of auditory nerve integrity, as confirmed by electrical promontory stimulation, when necessary.

For bilateral cochlear implants, an audiologic and medical evaluation must determine that a unilateral cochlear implant plus hearing aid in the contralateral ear will not result in binaural benefit for the member.

Non-audiological evaluations must include:

- Speech and language evaluation to determine enrollee's level of communicative ability; and
- Psychological and/or social work evaluation, as needed.

Pre-operative counseling shall be provided to the member, if age appropriate, and the member's caregiver and will provide:

- Information on implant components and function; risks, limitations, and potential benefits of implantation; the surgical procedure; and postoperative follow-up schedule;
- Appropriate post-implant expectations, including being prepared and willing to participate in pre- and post- implant assessment and rehabilitation programs; and
- Information about alternative communication methods to cochlear implants.

Preoperative Evaluation

If prior authorized, AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana will reimburse for preoperative evaluation services (i.e., evaluation of speech, language, voice, communication, auditory processing, and/or audiologic/aural rehabilitation) even when the member may not subsequently receive an implant.

Implants, Equipment, Repairs, and Replacements

At the time of surgery, AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana will reimburse the hospital for both the implant and the per diem.

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana will cover other necessary equipment, repairs, and replacements according to the Durable Medical Equipment fee schedule.

Implantation Procedure, Postoperative Rehabilitative Costs, and Subsequent Therapy

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana will cover the cochlear implant surgery as well as postoperative aural rehabilitation by an audiologist and subsequent speech, language, and hearing therapy.

Post-Operative Programming

AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana will cover cochlear implant post-operative programming and diagnostic analysis services.

This information will be updated in the [AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Provider Handbook](#) after **February 15, 2022**.

Questions regarding this message should be directed to AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana Provider Services at 1-888-922-0007. The Provider Services Department can be reached between 7:00 am – 7:00 pm daily.

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