

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2023

The Honorable Denis Richard McDonough  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington DC, 20420

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-Lasure  
Administrator  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
7500 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21244

The Honorable Gil Cisneros  
Under Secretary for Personnel Readiness  
Department of Defense  
14000 Defense Boulevard  
Washington, VA 20301

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja  
Director  
U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street NW  
Washington DC, 2042

Dear Secretary McDonough, Under Secretary Cisneros, Administrator Brooks-LaSure, and Director Ahuja:

We write to request information on the federal health benefits available to individuals who stutter. While progress has been made in recent years to lower barriers to accessing speech diagnoses and treatment resources, gaps in coverage within the benefits landscape persist. We request your help to better understand the current coverage for diagnosis and treatment for individuals who stutter under the following federal programs: Medicare, Medicaid, VA health care benefits – including CHAMPVA, TRICARE, and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program.

Stuttering is a type of speech impairment, a broader term to refer to any communication disorder that affects an individual's ability to produce clear and fluent speech. There are several types of speech impairments, including articulation disorders, phonological disorders, fluency disorders, and voice disorders. Stuttering is best described as a fluency disorder. Early intervention and treatment can help individuals with speech impairments to develop more effective communication skills and improve their quality of life.


To date, about 1 in 20 children and 1 in 100 adults in the United States stutter. Stuttering can have a significant impact on an individual's ability to communicate effectively. Left untreated, stuttering can have devastating implications for a child's social and emotional welfare, often leading to social isolation, low self-esteem, and academic difficulties. As this condition adversely affects a student's performance in the classroom, it can also impact that student's ability to graduate or pursue higher education. For adults, this can translate into diminished opportunity to pursue gainful employment or to advance in their career – with individuals who stutter often opting to pursue positions with less verbal communication regardless of their competency and despite lesser socioeconomic benefit.

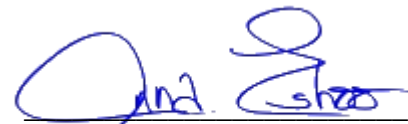
Access to effective speech therapy with a skilled Speech Language Pathologist who understands stuttering and people who stutter is crucial to managing and treating stuttering. Through speech therapy, individuals learn how to identify the moment of stuttering and use specialized speech interventions to promote greater confidence, and more effective communication.

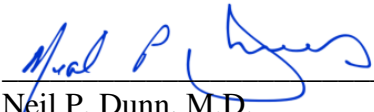
To help us better understand current coverage policy and support available to identify any existing barriers to care, we request information regarding federal coverage for the assessment, diagnosis, and follow-up speech therapy under the following programs: Medicare, Medicaid, CHAMPVA, TRICARE, and the FEHB program. Additionally, we request information on access to care and factors impacting access – including information regarding reimbursement, rates of diagnosis specific denials, and network adequacy regarding reimbursement, rates of diagnosis specific denials, and network adequacy.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

  
Kat Cammack  
Member of Congress

  
Anna Eshoo  
Member of Congress



Neil P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



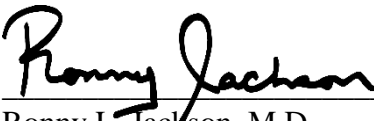
Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



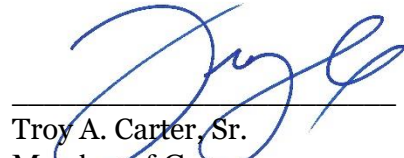
Andy Barr  
Member of Congress



Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.  
Member of Congress



Jodey C. Arrington  
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress