

Bibbity-Bobbity-Billing: The Magic of Getting Paid for Your Services

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Case Study Exercise: Covered or Non-Covered

Instructions: Based on the case vignettes provided, determine whether it meets the criteria for coverage under the Medicare program:

1. Medical Necessity (reasonable and necessary for diagnosis or treatment of an illness; new signs and symptoms)
2. Physician Order (MD, DO, ND) or order from a qualified non-physician provider (PA, NP, CNS)
3. Type of audiology service provided (diagnostic vs. therapeutic/rehabilitative based on Medicare rules for audiologists)
4. Audiologist performing the services (not a student or other audiology assistant/technician)

2023 List of Medicare Covered Audiology Services

- Audiology Services Homepage
 - <https://www.cms.gov/audiology-services>
- Medicare Audiology Code List
 - <https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/audiology-code-list-updated-7522.zip>

CPT/HCPCS	Short Descriptor	92555	Speech audiometry threshold	92601	Cochlear implant f/up exam, pt <7 years of age
92517	cVEMP, cervical w/inter & report	92556	Speech audiometry complete	92602	Reprogram cochlear implant, pt <7 years of age
92518	oVEMP, ocular w/inter & report	92557	Comprehensive hearing test	92603	Cochlear implant f/up exam, pt ≥7 years of age
92519	VEMP, cervical and ocular w/inter & report	92562	Loudness balance test	92604	Reprogram cochlear implant, pt ≥7 years of age
92537	Caloric vstblr test w/rec	92563	Tone decay hearing test	92620	Auditory function test w/report, initial 60 minutes
92538	Caloric vstblr test w/rec	92565	Stenger test, pure tone	92621	Auditory function test w/report, additional 15 minutes
92540	Basic vstblr evaluation	92567	Tympanometry	92625	Tinnitus assessment
92541	Spontaneous nystagmus test	92568	Acoustic reflex testing, threshold	92626	Eval aud function surgical, first hour
92542	Positional nystagmus test	92570	Acoustic immittance testing	92627	Eval aud function surgical, each additional 15 min
92544	Optokinetic nystagmus test	92571	Filtered speech test	92640	Aud brainstem implt program, per hour
92545	Oscillating tracking test, with recording	92572	Staggered spondaid word test	92651	AEP, broadband, w/ inter & report
92546	Sinusoidal rotational test	92575	Sensorineural acuity level test	92652	AEP, threshold estimation w/inter & report
92547	Supplemental electrical test	92576	Synthetic sentence id test	92653	AEP, threshold, dx w/inter & report
92548	CDP-SOT 6 cond w/interpretation & report	92577	Stenger test, speech		
92549	CDP-SOT 6 cond w/MCT and ADT w/interpretation & report	92579	Visual reinforcement audiometry		
92550	Tympanometry & reflex threshold	92582	Conditioning play audiometry		
92552	Pure tone audiometric air	92583	Select picture audiometry		
92553	Audiometry air & bone	92584	Electrocochleography		
		92587	Evoked auditory test limited w/ interpretation & report		
		92588	Evoked auditory test complete w/interpretation and report		

If all boxes are checked, this means that the service is COVERED. If you are missing even just one checkbox, this means that the services is NON-COVERED.

1. A patient calls and wishes to schedule an appointment with an audiologist for a hearing test. They note they have sensed changes in hearing and an increase in their tinnitus. They have a physician order for the testing.
 - Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services

2. A patient calls to schedule a hearing test with an audiologist so they can take the results to Costco to obtain a hearing aid. There is a physician order for the testing.
 - Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services

3. A patient calls to schedule a canalith repositioning procedure with an audiologist. They have a physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services

4. An unsupervised student provides a comprehensive audiometric evaluation. There is a physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services

5. A patient calls to schedule their free hearing screening (they saw your clinic's commercial) with an audiologist. They do not have a physician order on file.
- Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services
6. A patient calls and wishes to schedule an appointment with an audiologist for their "annual" hearing test. Your administrative assistant asks whether they are having new issues and they respond, "No, I don't think there have been changes. I just want to get it checked out each year like I do with my eyes." There is no physician order on file.
- Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services
7. A patient calls to schedule a tinnitus rehabilitation with an audiologist. They note there are significant changes in the intrusiveness of their tinnitus symptoms. They have a referral from a licensed professional counselor.
- Medical necessity
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order
 - Type of audiology service provided
 - Audiologist providing the services

ANSWER KEY

1. A patient calls and wishes to schedule an appointment with an audiologist for a hearing test. They note they have sensed changes in hearing and an increase in their tinnitus. They have a physician order for the testing.
 - Medical necessity—Yes. New signs and symptoms are present.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—Yes. They have an order.
 - Type of audiology service provided—Yes. Hearing testing is considered diagnostic, so this meets a benefit category for this service through Medicare.
 - Audiologist providing the services—Yes. It is planned that an audiologist will provide the services.
2. A patient calls to schedule a hearing test with an audiologist so they can take the results to Costco to obtain a hearing aid. They note perceived changes in their ability to understand people talking in background noise. There is a physician order for the testing.
 - Medical necessity—No. New signs and symptoms are present, but hearing tests for the purposes of obtaining a hearing aid are STATUTORILY EXCLUDED. This would not be considered a medically necessary service because their goal was to obtain a hearing aid.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—Yes. They have an order.
 - Type of audiology service provided—Yes, but really NO. Hearing testing is considered diagnostic, so this meets a benefit category for this service through Medicare. But, the purpose of the hearing test is to obtain a hearing aid, so in this instance, the hearing evaluation would not be a covered service. Medicare treats hearing tests differently based on the *reason for the test*.
 - Audiologist providing the services—Yes. It is planned that an audiologist will provide the services.
3. A patient calls to schedule a canalith repositioning procedure with an audiologist. They have a physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity—Yes. There are dizziness symptoms present, which clearly indicates medical necessity.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—Yes. They have an order.
 - Type of audiology service provided—No. This is considered a rehabilitative or therapeutic service. Rehabilitative/therapeutic audiology services are not reimbursable through Medicare. Under the Medicare program, audiologists are considered primarily considered diagnosticians. The only exception here is for cochlear implant programming and evaluation of pre- or post-operative auditory status with CIs.
 - Audiologist providing the services—Yes. It is planned that an audiologist will provide the services.
4. A patient needs a hearing test because they feel like their hearing has decreased in one ear. An unsupervised student provides a comprehensive audiometric evaluation. There is a physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity—Yes. There are new signs and symptoms (unilateral hearing issue).
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—Yes. They have an order.
 - Type of audiology service provided—Yes. Hearing testing is considered diagnostic, so this meets a benefit category for this service through Medicare.

- Audiologist providing the services—No. A student provided the service. Therefore, this is no longer considered a covered service because it was not performed by a licensed audiologist.
- 5. A patient calls to schedule their free hearing screening (they saw your clinic’s commercial), which is usually performed by the student clinician since they are certified to perform hearing screening by the state. They do not have a physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity—Maybe? The patient didn’t provide any information on whether their issues are new.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—No. There is no order on file.
 - Type of audiology service provided—No. Hearing screening are not considered a covered benefit through Medicare. Generally, screenings of any kind are not covered under Medicare. (This could include speech screenings, cognitive screenings, or sensory-organization-performance (SOP) screenings for balance.)
 - Audiologist providing the services—No. A student provided the service. However, since a screening is considered a non-covered service, the student can certainly do the screening if they have ‘adequate training’ to do so. Medicare would just not be billed.
- 6. A patient calls and wishes to schedule an appointment with an audiologist for their “annual” hearing test. Your administrative assistant asks whether they are having new issues and they respond, “No, I don’t think there have been changes. I just want to get it checked out each year like I do with my eyes.” There is no physician order on file.
 - Medical necessity—No. There are no new signs and symptoms. This hearing evaluation would be considered ‘routine’ testing and would thus not be covered under Medicare benefits.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—No. There is no order on file.
 - Type of audiology service provided-- Yes. Hearing testing is considered diagnostic, so this meets a benefit category for this service through Medicare.
 - Audiologist providing the services—Yes. It is planned that an audiologist will provide the services.
- 7. A patient calls to schedule a tinnitus rehabilitation with an audiologist. They note there are significant changes in the intrusiveness of their tinnitus symptoms. They have a referral from a licensed professional counselor.
 - Medical necessity—Yes. There are new signs and symptoms present as it relates to the patient’s tinnitus. This would substantiate medical necessity for the evaluation.
 - Physician (or other qualified NPP) order—No. A licensed professional counselor is not deemed to be a qualified non-physician provider who can place an order for audiology services.
 - Type of audiology service provided—No. This is considered a rehabilitative or therapeutic service. Rehabilitative/therapeutic audiology services are not reimbursable through Medicare. Under the Medicare program, audiologists are considered primarily diagnosticians. The only exception here is for cochlear implant programming and evaluation of pre- or post-operative auditory status with CIs.
 - Audiologist providing the services—Yes. It is planned that an audiologist will provide the services.