

Process for Assistive Technology and 3rd Party Billing

The process for who pays and how we pay for assistive technology devices appears to be an area of conflicting information within our districts. Hopefully the following information will help clear up the process.

Students receiving special education services are to be provided, as required by Federal law, a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). This means when we are looking at providing access to education based on a student's disability, money does not come out of the parent's pockets, nor should it be based on whether the child is or is not MA eligible. When having a discussion regarding access to education, at an IEP meeting, MA billing should not be mentioned. The statement of MA billing should also not appear in an evaluation report or IEP.

So how should this process be followed in regards to a communication device? The team determines a need for assistive technology through a school special education evaluation process. The team looks at where the student is functioning, what has already occurred in instruction for the student (perhaps a conversation about the communication notebook and how it is working in the school and home) and what they want the student to be able to do in the school setting. The special education team can also consider and review outside evaluations and recommendations as part of the evaluation. All of this information is documented in the special education evaluation report which leads the team to determine what assistive technology devices (low tech to high tech) they will be trialing with the student.

If the team made a decision about rental or purchase of a device the *Assistive Technology Decision Documentation form* (available on the NLSEC website) is filled out with the supporting data (as required by the district's business manager) and given to the business manager who then purchases the equipment. It is the business manager that determines how it is paid....special education funding code, 3rd party billing, general fund, etc. The Assistive Technology Decision documentation form clearly indicates whether a student is MA eligible or not. If questions occur about this eligibility the business manager will ask for clarification either from the IEP manager or the NLSEC business manager

The team determines a need based on the student's disability and proceeds with a discussion of how the specialized instruction is to occur with or without assistive technology. The completed IEP provides supporting information of how the team came to the decision (perhaps providing documentation about a trial with the device), documented present level of performance, and a documented specialized instructional need for the student being able to communicate within the educational setting. The use of an assistive technology device can either be addressed in the goal/objectives or accommodation section of the IEP. Once again, because this is based on an educational need and not a medical need we are not to talk about MA payment at the IEP meeting or within the written IEP.

No other written report needs to accompany the request for purchase of an assistive technology device to the district business manager, nor to MA. There is also not a mandated requirement for 3rd party billing that the school perform trials with 3 different devices prior to making a decision.

Hopefully this information will clarify 3rd party billing in your school and the process that needs to be followed. If you have further questions the staff from the Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative will be more than happy to meet with all special education staff in your district to help with this clarification.