

RICK SANTORUM
PENNSYLVANIA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3804

202-224-6324

February 3, 1999

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AGING

Ms. Nancy-Ann Min DeParle
Administrator
Health Care Financing Administration
Room 314-G
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. Min DeParle,

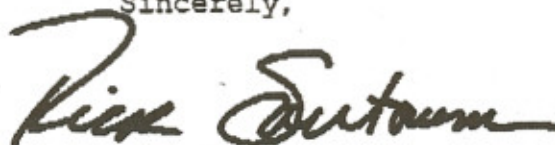
I have recently been contacted by several of my constituents concerning Medicare coverage for Augmentative Communication Devices ("AAC Devices"). These devices are designed to give individuals the capacity to communicate with others, and thereby lead safer, more productive lives. These individuals are generally unable to speak, use sign language or communicate in writing due to severe disabilities.

In 1987, HCFA issued a National Coverage Determination (NCD) which classified AAC Devices as "communicators" and therefore not eligible for Medicare coverage. However, since this decision, funding for AAC Devices has been granted by every state Medicaid program, by CHAMPUS and the Veterans Administration at the federal level, and by hundreds of commercial health insurance providers. In addition, HCFA's classification of AAC Devices as Durable Medical Equipment is at variance with the Food and Drug Administration's classification of such devices as "prosthetics".

My constituents are concerned that previous requests for information regarding the reasoning behind HCFA's 1987 coverage determination have not been successful. They are also concerned about not being able to obtain information regarding the original AAC Device which was evaluated in the decision process. I would encourage HCFA to consider revisiting this issue in the near future, in light of AAC Device coverage standards in other public and private insurance programs, as well as the apparent unavailability of records relating to the original non-coverage determination. Also, there have been great advances in medical technology since the 1987 decision, warranting a fresh look at today's AAC models.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Santorum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Rick Santorum
United States Senate

RJS\kr