



CHAMPVA FACT SHEET 01-8 Durable Medical Equipment (DME)

What is CHAMPVA?

CHAMPVA is a health benefits program in which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shares the cost of certain health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries (see Eligibility Fact Sheet 01-3 for criteria for CHAMPVA coverage). CHAMPVA is managed by the VA's Health Administration Center (HAC) in Denver, Colorado. We process CHAMPVA applications, determine eligibility, authorize benefits, and process medical claims.

What is DME?

DME is equipment that can withstand repeated use; is primarily used to service a medical purpose; is generally not useful in the absence of an illness or injury; and is appropriate for use in the home. DME includes such items as a wheelchair or a hospital bed.

Why does CHAMPVA require preauthorization for DME?

Preauthorization is required to ensure that the item is required for a CHAMPVA-covered medical condition and as a cost saving measure for the beneficiary and the government.

How does CHAMPVA save the beneficiary and the government money through preauthorization?

Preauthorization allows us to purchase the DME through the Veterans Affairs (VA) at a discounted rate. There is no cost share if the DME is preauthorized and obtained through a VA source. Requests for preauthorization must include the doctor's DME order or certificate of medical necessity.

What if the patient needs the equipment immediately and the VA Medical Center source for the DME may take several weeks?

In the case of an emergency, immediate rental will be authorized from a local supply center until the equipment can be provided through VA sources. In urgent need situations (such as being discharged from the hospital to the home and requiring a hospital bed), preauthorization may be requested by phone. If purchase of the equipment is required, rental can be approved while the purchase of the equipment is arranged through the VA. A certificate of medical necessity is still required.

What kinds of items have to be preauthorized?

Any item that costs more than \$300 to buy or when the total rental price is \$300 or more. Typically these include wheelchairs, hospital beds, and specialized lifts.

What documents are required for preauthorization?

Requests for preauthorization must include the doctor's DME order or certificate of medical necessity. This information can be submitted in the form of a letter or by using a Medicare certificate of medical necessity form. In either case, the following information must be included:

- the name, address, and tax identification number of the provider,
- the required equipment (the make and model number, cost and specifications for any customization),
- diagnosis,
- the medical necessity, and
- the anticipated duration that the item is needed.

Where do we send the documents?

VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA
ATTN: Preauthorization
PO Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023

Can we obtain preauthorization over the phone?

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What types of equipment are NOT covered by the CHAMPVA program?

- Exercise equipment
- Hearing aids or other communication devices
- Hot tubs
- Household and recliner chairs
- Luxury or deluxe equipment (CHAMPVA covers only the cost of basic equipment that meets your medical needs)
- Maintenance agreements/contracts

- Repair and adjustment costs on rented/leased equipment (those costs should be included in the rental/lease agreements)
- Spas
- Swimming pools
- Vehicle lifts that are non-detachable and/or manufactured for a specific vehicle that cannot be removed from one vehicle and used on another
- Whirlpools

Are DME repair costs covered?

When it is most economical to repair the DME and the damage is not a result of neglect or abuse of the equipment, repairs are covered. If the repairs are extensive and costly, it may be more economical for the government to replace the DME rather than repair it.

Are the cost maintenance agreements covered?

No. However, routine and periodic servicing (such as testing, cleaning, regulating, and checking), which is required by the manufacturer to be performed by an authorized technician, is covered.

Will CHAMPVA purchase or lease the item?

This depends on what the doctor has indicated in the DME order regarding the expected period of need. It also depends on what is most cost effective for the government and the beneficiary.

Does CHAMPVA have an allowable amount for DME?

Yes. This varies, based on the VA cost for the item.

What will the patient have to pay if the item is obtained locally?

Assuming the patient has met their annual deductible (\$50), they pay 25% of the allowable amount.

Does the DME supplier have to accept the allowable amount?

Yes, under 38 CFR section 17.272(b) (3) and (4), providers must accept the CHAMPVA allowable rate and cannot balance bill the beneficiary.

How do I get more information?

- Mail: VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA
PO Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023
- Phone: 1-800-733-8387 Monday - Friday 8:15 AM – 6:00 PM Eastern Time
- FAX: 1-303-331-7804
- E-mail: HAC.INQ@MED.VA.GOV
- Website: www.va.gov/hac