

Medicaid Communication Access a Success Story!

On Jan. 26, 2021, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) launched the Medicaid Communication Access service. NCDHHS' goal is to improve communication access in healthcare settings for NC Medicaid and Health Choice beneficiaries and their companions (parent, spouse, partner) who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind if their child, spouse or partner can hear, and is a Medicaid/Health Choice beneficiary.

This joint venture of the Division of Health Benefits (DHB) and the [Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(DSDHH\)](#) enables DSDHH to reimburse Medicaid contracted providers for a variety of services, such as sign language interpreters, Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) services, and more in approved settings.

Highlights as of February 28, 2022

The highlights of the first 13 month's progress include:

- The NC Legislature approved funding for the service to continue through the end of State Fiscal Year 2023 (June 30, 2023)
- Over 150 healthcare providers registered to participate
- Over \$60,000 reimbursed to healthcare providers for communication access services
- Over \$3,000 paid to Support Service Providers to be present with DeafBlind beneficiaries during healthcare appointments
- The [Medicaid Communication Access service](#) webpage launched

Additional Services

Additionally, DSDHH can provide the following services at no cost to the provider:

- Pocketalker, a personal sound amplification listening device that is a tool for communicating with hard of hearing individuals
- Support Service Provider (SSP) services for DeafBlind patients. The SSP provides guidance and transportation services for DeafBlind individuals
- Training and education to meet the needs of healthcare providers

Retroactive Reimbursement

As a one-time catch-up, healthcare providers can be retroactively reimbursed for communication access (e.g., sign language interpreters) they provided for Medicaid or Health Choice beneficiaries since January 26, 2021. Once registered, providers may submit those invoices to DSDHH to be reimbursed.**

Future of the Program

DHB and DSDHH are hopeful that the NC Legislature will decide to make this program permanent. **Participation by the provider community is key.** Please help us achieve this goal by continuing to utilize the service and share the information with other providers. The Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind of North Carolina need your continued support. If you are already registered, please share this information through

your network of healthcare providers. If you are not registered, please complete this [online registration form](#) (takes about three minutes) and start reaping the benefits of this new service!

Looking Forward

As we look forward to the second year of the service, we are committed to improving on the successes we had in our first year. If you have any questions about this new service, please contact David Litman, the Medicaid Communication Access Coordinator, at DSDHH.Medicaid.CommAccess@dhhs.nc.gov or (984) 884-1093.

**Invoices might not be reimbursed 100%. The healthcare provider is responsible for the remaining balance.