



# **Walking aids and accessories benefits**

Alberta Aids to Daily Living  
Program Manual Section C

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## Policy C – 01

### Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits Description

#### Policy Statement

AADL provides funding for walking aids and accessories for AADL clients with chronic, long-term difficulties in ambulation to enhance their independence and ability to participate in daily activities, increase safety during these activities and prevent the need for a higher level of care.

Best practice supports the use of walking aids to increase safety outcomes.

AADL walking aids and accessories benefits include specialty canes and crutches, two- and four-wheeled walkers and accessories required for clinically assessed needs.

Slow down brakes and oxygen holders are considered accessories for four-wheeled walkers. Not all walkers can accommodate slow down brakes and oxygen holders.

AADL uses a benchmark model to fund walking aids and accessories benefits found in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories. See Policy C – 11 Definitions for the definition of benchmark model.

Products and pricing on the approved product list are reviewed annually and are subject to change by AADL at any time during the year.

Walking aids and accessories benefit authorizations are processed through the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

AADL-approved manufacturers of these products are listed in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories. Manufacturers may apply to become an AADL-approved manufacturer at any time.

Walking aids and accessories benefits are considered owned by the AADL client once the funding is released to the client's vendor.

A client may enter a rental agreement with an AADL vendor for temporary or short-term use of this type of equipment. AADL does not reimburse clients for rental charges associated with temporary, short-term use of walking aids.

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## Policy C – 02

### Eligibility Criteria

#### Policy Statement

Clients must meet general eligibility requirements found in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures online at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>.

A client's eligibility for walking aids and accessories benefits must be determined by an AADL authorizer prior to authorization.

AADL provides funding for walking aids for clients who meet all the following criteria:

- the client has chronic, long term walking impairment
- the client's weight falls within the weight limits of the equipment, and
- the client has no other benefit for walking function with the exception of prosthetics or orthotics

AADL provides funding for walking aid accessories for clients who meet the following criteria:

- for oxygen related accessories, the client must receive oxygen benefits through the AADL program
- for forearm attachments and slow down brakes, the client must have documented clinical need, e.g. upper extremity impairment, ataxic gait

Clients who are likely to require oxygen/slow down brakes in the future must be provided four-wheeled walker models that can accommodate these accessories at a later date.

AADL does not provide funding for walking aids and accessories benefits for:

- short-term interventions or use such as pre- or post-operative ambulation needs
- use in acute or sub-acute care facilities. The equipment may be ordered as part of a discharge plan when client is returning to the community
- clients who are non-compliant
- options chosen for personal preference or not clinically indicated

AADL provides a limited number of walking aids and accessories benefits per eligible client based on current best practice and expected use. See Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories for specific limits.

#### Procedure

##### Authorizers:

- Confirm clients meet AADL eligibility requirements.
- Confirm clients' previous benefit consumption:
  - Refer to Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories for quantity limits at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
  - Refer to the patient inquiry screen on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal and check product consumption.
  - Refer to Policy C – 06 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.
- Inform clients of their eligibility status.

##### Clients:

- Confirm eligibility with authorizer.
- Sign Client Consent form.

##### Vendors:

- Check clients' previous benefit consumption:
  - Refer to Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories to determine quantity limits for each walking aid and accessory at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
  - Check on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal for client's benefit consumption history.
  - Refer to Policy C – 06 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.

**Alberta Blue Cross:**

- Responds to telephone or email requests for information on walking benefits eligibility, and provides reference to the AADL website for further information at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>
- Adjudicates authorizations submitted through the online health portal.

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## Policy C – 03

### Authorizer Qualifications

#### Policy Statement

AADL accepts applications from occupational therapists and physiotherapists who meet the general eligibility criteria set out in Policy GN – 03 Application to be an Authorizer in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures.

Walking aids and accessories are considered a primary product range for occupational therapists and physiotherapists as set out in Policy GN – 03. See Policy GN – 03 for further explanation on primary and secondary product ranges.

Authorizers and assessors must be competent in assessments and related interventions for impaired ambulation. Knowledge on the purpose of the various options and features on walking aids is necessary.

#### Procedure

##### AADL Authorizer Applicants:

- Confirm eligibility.
- Complete the authorizer application form at: <https://formsmgmt.gov.ab.ca/Public/AADL2218.xdp>
- Complete the requisite authorizer training and authorize once approved by AADL in accordance with policies and procedures.
- Register with Alberta Blue Cross as a provider.

##### AADL:

- Provides authorizer online pre-requisite training module.
- Provides in-house training for primary product ranges.
- Monitors authorizer activities and determines compliance with policies and procedures.



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## Policy C – 04

### Authorization Process

#### Policy Statement

Walking aids and accessories benefit authorization includes the assessment, equipment trial and the submission of a valid authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.

Authorizers must adhere to the general policies and procedures for authorizing AADL benefits and follow the AADL procedure for authorizing walking aids and accessories benefits.

Whenever possible, authorizers should access loaner programs for walking aids and accessories for palliative clients to reduce client costs associated with cost share.

#### Assessment

Assessments should be in the client's home environment to ensure the equipment is suitable in that environment. As an alternative, a simulated home environment may be used if able to replicate. The mode of transporting the equipment should be considered. Equipment which has been purchased by AADL and is found to be inappropriate for the client's home or cannot fit in the client's vehicle is not replaced by AADL.

Assessments must consider the following clinical elements: gait, range of motion, posture, sustained grip strength, and balance.

The assessment date on the authorization is the date the assessment is completed, including eligibility and equipment trial.

#### Equipment Trial

Equipment must be from an AADL-approved manufacturer listed in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories that meets the generic description.

Walking aids and accessories vendors will provide equipment for a trial period that must not exceed two days. At the end of the trial period, the equipment must be returned. The client may not keep the trial equipment.

#### Authorization Submission

Authorizations are entered on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal after the client's product consumption history has been reviewed to confirm eligibility for the benefit.

Authorizations for walking aids and accessories benefits expire when the benefit has been provided to the client and the associated vendor claims have been processed, or within a year of the assessment date.

## Procedure

### Authorizers:

- Confirm client eligibility for benefit. Refer to Policy C – 02 Eligibility Criteria.
- If benefit requested is over frequency limit, complete a quantity and frequency review request authorization on the online health portal and upload relevant documents. Refer to Policy C – 06 Quantity and Frequency Limits for details.
- Assess client or review assessment if assessor is not the authorizer. Client assessment must be completed in home environment or simulated home environment. Consider ability to transport walker in vehicle.
- Document assessment details and clinical rationale to support the provision of walking aids and accessories benefits. This must be kept in the client's file and submitted to AADL upon request. Ensure the client understands any costs that may incur. See "Benchmark Pricing" and "Upgrade Costs" under Policy C – 11 Definitions.
- Provide client with choice of vendors as per list of AADL-approved vendors. Policies for the use of trial equipment should be explained to the client. See form: "AADL Trial Equipment Use" on the AADL website. Arrange for trial equipment to be returned to the vendor once the trial has been completed.
- Determine where equipment is to be delivered once ordered and arrange for followup as appropriate.
- Complete authorization on online health portal and submit. Include criteria-related information as required. Be sure to include benefit catalogue number.
- Have client sign Client Consent form.
- Advise client that AADL will not reimburse clients for any rental charges if the client chooses to rent equipment.

### Clients:

- Fully participate in assessment and trial.
- Return equipment to AADL-approved vendor after trial period is over.
- Sign Client Consent form signifying agreement and understanding.

### Vendors:

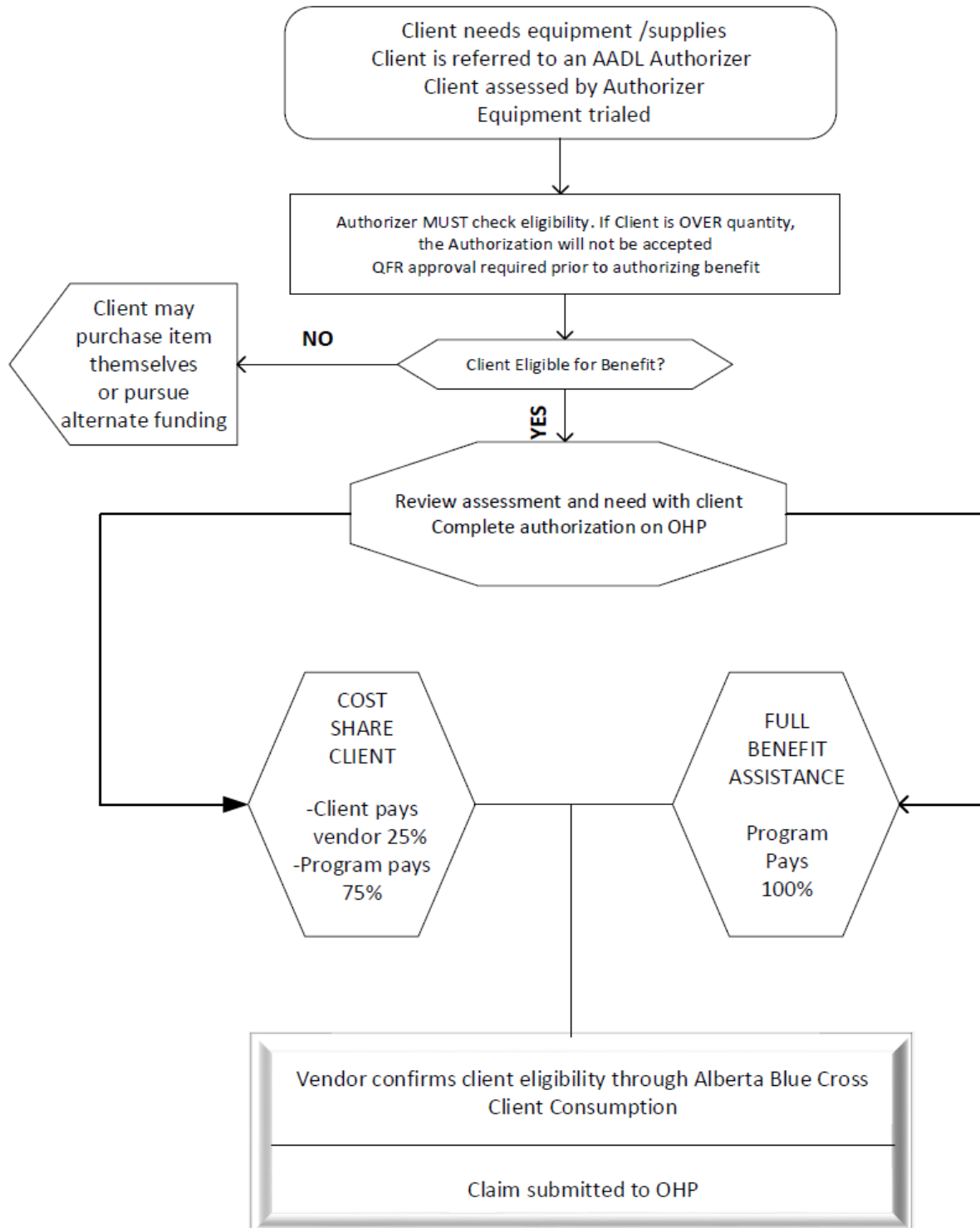
- Provide trial equipment as requested by the authorizer.
- Check for authorization on the online health portal and confirm eligibility by referring to client's consumption history.
- Provide benefit.

### Alberta Blue Cross:

- Reviews authorizations for compliance and accuracy.
- Processes valid authorizations.

# Figure 1

## Authorization Process Flow Chart



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## Policy C – 05

### Vendor and Trained Provider Qualifications

#### Policy Statement

AADL-approved walking aids and accessories vendors must meet the following criteria:

- meet AADL's general vendor criteria as outlined in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures
- adhere to benchmark pricing as outlined in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures
- must have an area in the store that allows clients to trial the equipment and provide authorizers with equipment for trial purposes
- must have a service area allocated on the premises that will allow for the provision of minor repair services on walking aids and accessories

#### Product/Equipment

- Stock on site a minimum of:
  - a choice of at least one AADL-approved manufacturer product for four-point canes, forearm crutches and at least two manufacturer products for two-wheeled walkers
  - a choice of two different AADL-approved manufacturer products for four-wheeled walkers; vendors must also have at least one each of a standard, heavy duty, tall and wide models fully set up on display
  - common replacement/repair items and accessories (e.g., forearm attachments, slow down brakes, wheels, standard brake parts, handle grips and rubber tips)
- AADL vendors must ensure walking aids and accessories provided through AADL meet all quality standards set out in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories.

#### Trained Provider Qualifications

- Maintain a minimum of one staff member who is has knowledge of and experience with walking aids and accessories. Qualifications include knowledge and experience in the repair of small equipment.
- Ensure staff are educated on AADL policies and procedures as stated in the most current AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures, Program Manual Section C – Walkers and Accessories and Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories.
- Ensure staff have the necessary expertise regarding the provision of AADL benefits and associated invoicing and business processes.

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## Policy C – 06

### Providing Walking Aids and Accessories Benefits

#### Policy Statement

Providing walking aids and accessories benefits includes an equipment trial with the client, providing the equipment, fitting the equipment to the client, documenting, client billing and claims.

AADL vendors must have an agreement with AADL and Alberta Blue Cross to provide walking aids and accessories benefits.

AADL vendors must ensure walking aids and accessories provided through AADL funding meet all quality standards set out in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories.

AADL uses a benchmark pricing model for walking aids and accessories benefits. The AADL vendor must offer the AADL client at least one walking aid (and accessories) for a price equal to or below benchmark prices on the approved product list.

Clients must be advised that they should purchase insurance to cover the cost of replacements should the equipment be lost, stolen or damaged.

Vendors are responsible for the initial assembly and set up of all walking aid benefits provided to a client. For example, setting the walker at an appropriate height for client.

Clients are responsible for repairs and maintenance of all the walking aid benefits. See Policy C – 08 Ownership and Responsibilities for details.

#### Procedure

##### AADL Authorizers:

- Arrange follow-up to ensure the walking aid and any additional accessories are of benefit to the client.
- Complete documentation, including:
  - client able to operate walking aid (and any additional accessory)
  - client provided with and understands instructions on wear and care of walking aid (and any additional accessories)
  - client informed of recommendation to purchase insurance to cover equipment in case of loss, damage or theft
  - client satisfaction with fit

##### Clients:

- Clients (or their guardian/trustee) pay the cost-share portion (unless exempt) directly to the vendor for selected equipment.
- Receive walking aid and any additional accessories and confirm satisfaction that the equipment fits and meets specifications.
- Ensure ability to operate walking aid and any additional accessories.
- Understand responsibility for the care and maintenance of the equipment as equipment is not replaced due to damage outside of normal wear and care.

##### Vendors:

- Provide walking aid and any additional accessories and confirm equipment meets specifications.
- Provide written instructions on walking aids and accessories wear and care.
- Document client satisfaction and/or person and designation of person accepting responsibility for client satisfaction of the equipment.
- Confirm eligibility on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal for the benefit prior to providing.
- Enter the claim on the online health portal on the day it is provided to the client (service date).

**AADL:**

- Coordinates vendor agreements.

**Alberta Blue Cross:**

- Conducts audits on authorizers' and vendors' compliance with policy and procedures for quality assurance and accountability purposes.
- Audits charges on claims for equipment submitted by vendors and pays vendor claims.

## Policy C – 07

### Quantity and Frequency Limits

#### Policy Statement

AADL sets limits on the number of walking aids and accessories benefits funded per eligible client based on current best practice and expected wear. See Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories for specific limits at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>.

Walking aids will only be replaced if:

- The equipment has been maintained and has been used as designed (normal wear); and
- The current equipment was ordered for long term needs; and
- The client's condition has changed and the current equipment no longer meets the clinically assessed basic need.

If a client requires a change or replacement for their current walking aid or accessory and meets the criteria above, a quantity and frequency review request authorization must be submitted on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal. The following documents must be uploaded with the authorization:

- Quantity and Frequency Review Request form
- Client Consent form
- other supporting documentation

Refer to the quantity and frequency review policies in AADL Program Manual Section GN – General Policies and Procedures at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-gn>.

Requests to replace four-wheeled walkers with another model that can accommodate an oxygen holder or slow down brakes must include rationale as to why this change was not anticipated during the current walker assessment.

The AADL program does not replace equipment in cases of authorizer error, or equipment that has been lost, stolen, misused or damaged.

#### Procedure

##### Authorizers:

- Explain policy and process to client, ensuring client and/or caregiver understands.
- Pursue alternate funding, such as private insurance, prior to requesting additional funds from AADL.
- Submit quantity and frequency review request authorization on the online health portal and include the following documentation:
  - Quantity and Frequency Review Request form
  - Client Consent form
  - other supporting documentation
- Receive notification of review decision from Alberta Blue Cross and notify the client.

##### Clients:

- Maintain care of walking aid and accessory to prolong life of benefit provided through AADL and to prevent need for premature replacement of benefit.
- Pursue alternate funding sources prior to requesting additional funds from AADL.
- Seek alternate funding for equipment needs that fall outside the quantity and frequency limits.

**Vendors:**

- Identify clients who require a quantity and frequency review to replace a walking aid funded by AADL. Refer these clients to an AADL authorizer for reassessment.
- Educate client on wear and care of equipment, and availability of maintenance parts to prolong life of benefit and prevent need for early replacement.
- Prevent the need for quantity and frequency review requests by replacing or repairing equipment when under warranty or when it is cost-effective (see “Cost-effective repairs” under Policy C - 11 Definitions).
- Provide AADL funded replacement equipment to client when valid authorization has been confirmed.

**Alberta Blue Cross:**

- Receives and logs quantity and frequency review requests.
- Forwards quantity and frequency review requests to AADL for adjudication.
- Updates quantity and frequency review status on the online health portal, which can then be viewed on the provider portal.
- Sends notification of the quantity and frequency review decision to the authorizer, and client if necessary.

**AADL:**

- Reviews quantity and frequency review requests in view of identified clinical needs.
- Adjudicates the quantity and frequency review request and provides a response to Alberta Blue Cross to update the quantity and frequency review status.



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## Policy C – 08

### Ownership and Responsibility – Repairs and Maintenance

#### Policy Statement

AADL provides clear and consistent guidelines and procedures for responsibilities related to maintaining and repairing AADL-funded walking aids to ensure transparency, consistency and accountability.

Walking aids and accessories funded by AADL are owned by the client.

Clients (family/guardian/trustee) are responsible for keeping their AADL-funded equipment in good, safe working order through regular maintenance and repairs according to manufacturer recommendations.

Clients are responsible for the costs of maintenance and repairs outside warranty. Warranty periods are listed in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List C – Walkers and Accessories at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-c>

Maintenance includes ensuring any moving parts are cleaned and move smoothly, checking and adjusting or replacing brakes as needed and replacing rubber tips or handles when worn.

AADL walking aids and accessories vendors provide warranty, repair and maintenance services on AADL-funded equipment.

Government-funded equipment is never to be resold by a client, authorizer or vendor. Once the client no longer requires the equipment, it may be donated to a community organization or individual in need.

#### Procedure

##### Authorizers:

- Ensure client understands responsibility for care and maintenance of AADL-funded equipment.
- Advise clients to keep a record of the initial invoice from the vendor as well as any maintenance and repairs to equipment.

##### Clients:

- Request information and/or equipment manual from vendor to become familiar with warranty, maintenance, repair and manufacturer recommendations.
- Ensure reasonable care and maintenance of AADL-funded walking aids and accessories.
- Accept responsibility to obtain insurance in case of damage or loss of equipment.
- Keep a record of the serial number, make and model on the vendor invoice as proof of AADL funding.

##### Vendors:

- Review care and maintenance of AADL-funded walking aids and accessories with clients. Provide manufacturer manual as available.
- Ensure AADL “Not for Resale” sticker is adhered to the equipment.
- Provide maintenance and repair services to clients as requested.
- Assist client in being reassessed when equipment is no longer cost-effective to repair based on AADL standard formula – repair should not exceed 50 per cent of the cost of equipment purchased new.
  - If equipment is not cost-effective to repair, advise client to get reassessed by an AADL authorizer.

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## Policy C – 09

### Refusal of the Equipment

#### Policy Statement

Clients who refuse equipment are not eligible for AADL funding for another walking aid benefit for a minimum of six months. During the authorization process, the client agreed to trial the equipment and ensured their home and living situation accommodated the equipment.

Clients and/or authorizers must notify the vendor as soon as possible if unforeseen problems arise and the equipment is no longer appropriate for the client. If the equipment has not yet been delivered to the client, the vendor may agree to place the equipment back in their inventory with no charge to AADL or the client. In that case, the authorization must be cancelled on the online health portal by the authorizer.

Clients who request funding for a benefit after refusing the same type of benefit must submit a letter explaining the circumstances of their refusal and assurance that they will accept the authorized benefit this time. The client must also agree to accept any costs associated with providing the benefit a second time, including any cost-share fees.

The authorizer must submit a quantity and frequency review request on behalf of the client who refused the equipment.

Clients who refuse to accept equipment a second time will not be eligible again for that benefit.

#### Procedure

##### Authorizers:

- Advise client of the consequences of equipment refusal.
- Complete a quantity and frequency review request authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal for the item and upload the letter from the client (family/guardian/trustee) as supporting documentation.
- If client requests the same benefit be authorized that was refused previously, obtain letter from client/family explaining circumstances and providing assurances described in policy above.

##### Clients:

- Participate in reassessment with authorizer.
- Write letter describing circumstances and providing assurances described above.
- Agree to accept costs associated with replacing equipment.

##### AADL:

- Receives the quantity and frequency review request and supporting documentation and reviews the circumstances around the refusal of the equipment.
- Adjudicates and provides decision to Alberta Blue Cross.

##### Alberta Blue Cross:

- Receives and logs quantity and frequency review requests.
- Forwards quantity and frequency review requests to AADL for adjudication.
- Updates quantity and frequency review status on the online health portal, which can then be viewed on the provider portal.
- Sends notification of the quantity and frequency review decision to the authorizer, and client if necessary.

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## Policy C – 10

### Patient Claim Statement

#### Policy Statement

Walking aids and accessories vendors must provide every client with a patient claim statement for each benefit invoiced to the AADL program. The statement can be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal, and must include general information such as statement details, Alberta Blue Cross contact information and client data.

The patient claim statement is comprised of three sections: statement information, claim summary and claim details.

The claim summary displays the overall breakdown of how much each client is responsible for against the total claimed amount for all claims submitted:

- Total amount claimed – The sum of claimed amounts for all claims submitted.
- AADL will pay – The total amount that AADL will cover for all claims submitted.
- Client will pay – The total amount the client is responsible to pay for all claims submitted. This amount is the sum of any cost-share amount the client owes and upgrade charges that are not covered by AADL.

Clients must be provided with a copy of their patient claim statement.

#### Procedure

##### Vendors:

- Provide clients with a patient claim statement for AADL benefits. The patient claim statement must be printed from the Alberta Blue Cross online health portal.
- For cost-share clients, identify the AADL contribution and the client's cost-share contribution for each benefit.
- For cost-share exempt clients, identify AADL's contribution for each benefit.
- Retain a copy of the patient claim statement on the client's file.

##### Alberta Blue Cross:

- Provide vendors with a patient claim statement through the online health portal as required.

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# Policy C – 11

## Definitions

### Approved Product List

The approved product list is a document on the AADL website outlining the products for which AADL provides funding. Only products listed on the approved product list are available through AADL.

### Benchmark Pricing

AADL provides a generic description of a benchmark benefit and sets the benchmark price as the maximum price AADL will fund for any product that fits the generic description. The benchmark prices for walking aids and accessories are listed under the column Price Maximum in the approved product list. Vendors must provide at least one item within the benchmark price.

### Community Recycle

AADL-funded equipment identified as community recycle may be recycled within the client's home community. The client may donate the equipment to another client, local community recycle pool or facility once it is no longer needed. It may not be resold.

### Cost-Effective Repairs

Repairs are considered cost-effective when the cost of the repair does not exceed 50 per cent of the cost to replace the entire walking aid.

### Equipment Trial

An equipment trial involves the client and caregiver trying the equipment to ensure the one chosen is appropriate. A trial must include accessing environments where the equipment will be used, such as the bathroom and bedroom. Simulated environments are accepted. Trial equipment is provided by AADL walking aid and accessories vendors according to trial equipment guidelines.

### Palliative Client

A client is deemed palliative if they are in the end stage of a terminal illness (six months or less to end of life). Care is considered compassionate and focused on symptom relief.

### Upgrade Costs

Upgrade is the term used to describe any costs for benefit features or options that are not covered by AADL and are the responsibility of the client. Cost-share portions are not considered part of the upgrade cost. Upgrades are over and above cost-share.

### Valid Authorization

An authorization is considered valid when information submitted to Alberta Blue Cross is complete, the Client Consent form is signed and all necessary clinical rationale is documented, the client meets the relevant eligibility criteria and any requisite prior approval has been provided.