

# Stuttering Treatment

April 12, 2006

XYZ Health Plan  
500 Main Street, Suite 101  
Washington, DC 20011

Re: Adam Wilson  
Member ID#: 321654789  
Member Name: Mary Wilson  
Group Name: VWXY  
Group ID#: 2500

Dear Claims Department:

I am writing in support of payment for speech-language pathology services for Adam Wilson, a 7-year-old child with disfluent speech. Coverage was denied by XYZ Health Plan because services are considered “educational” in nature. XYZ further stated that it would pay for speech-language treatment “if the speech disorder has its origin in a definable illness or injury caused by a diagnosed physiological dysfunction,” and concluded that “stuttering is not an illness.”

Stuttering is an illness as it has been classified and given a diagnostic code in the *International Classification of Diseases*, 9th Revision. According to *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, 24th edition, illness is defined as “disease,” which is further defined as a “disorder of body functions,” and is a condition marked by deviation from the normal healthy state. Healthy means free from disease or dysfunction. The stutterer is not free from dysfunction, as evidenced by the lack of normal speech function.

Determination of medical considers whether the service is essential and appropriate to the diagnosis and/or treatment of an illness or injury. Speech-language pathology services are “essential and appropriate” in treating Adam’s stuttering.

Research indicates growing support that stuttering is physiologically based. Studies of adult stutters show that these individuals had anatomical irregularities in the areas of the brain that control language and speech (*Neurology*, July 24, 2001). Shames and Rubin (*Stuttering Then and Now*, Publisher? 1986) conclude that research provides substantial evidence that stuttering represents the “product of aberrations in physiological function.”

Speech-language pathologists are responsible for diagnosing and treating people who stutter. Treatment for stuttering results in improvement for about 70% of all cases across the life span. Treatment effectiveness studies of school-age children demonstrate an average of 61% reduction in stuttering frequency.

Speech-language pathology services are not “educational” in nature, but instead are a health related service. The services are recognized as health care services by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Please reconsider this claim for speech-language pathology services. The services are medically necessary to treat an illness, and the services are health care related.

Sincerely,

Jane A. Smith, PhD, CCC-SLP

SAMPLE