Manual Wheelchair Documentation Criteria

There are specific requirements per the Affordable Care Act (ACA) for select durable medical equipment (DME), including manual wheelchairs and accessories.

1. An in-person, face-to-face examination with the treating physician (MD, DO, DPM, PA, NP, CNS) and,
2. The treating physician must document that the beneficiary was evaluated and/or treated for a condition that supports the need for the item(s) of DME ordered; and,
3. The face-to-face examination must have occurred sometime during the six (6) months prior to the date of the order for the item.

In addition to the Affordable Care Act requirements, insurance carriers have specific criteria that must be met for the manual wheelchairs and accessories to be considered medically necessary.

The in-person, face to face examination with the treating physician (MD, DO, DPM, PA, NP, CNS) must include A through H if no referral to OT/PT for evaluation:

A. Diagnose the condition(s) that cause the mobility limitation that impairs the patient from participating in 1 or more mobility-related activities of daily living (MRADLs)
B. Document the patient’s symptoms that impair/limit ambulation in the home
C. Document how the patient’s mobility limitations interfere with one or more MRADLs
D. Document why the limitation cannot be sufficiently resolved by the use of a cane, or walker
E. Document the patient has not expressed unwillingness to use the wheelchair
F. Document the manual wheelchair will improve the patient’s ability to participate in MRADLs on a regular basis in the home
G. Document the patient has sufficient upper extremity function supported by objective information and other physical and mental capabilities needed to safely utilize the wheelchair
H. Document if the patient that has a caregiver that is willing and able to provide assistance with wheelchair

If referred to OT/PT for evaluation – D through H must be addressed in the therapist’s evaluation. Treating Physician would be responsible for only A-C and I and J.

I. Document and order OT/PT, if needed, to complete bullet(s) D through H
J. Review, sign, and date OT/PT documentation with statement of concurrence

Vague or subjective statements are insufficient and do not objectively address the mobility limitation or provide a clear picture of the patient’s mobility deficit(s). Examples of vague or subjective descriptions of the patient’s mobility limitations include:

- ✓ Upper extremity weakness
- ✓ Poor endurance
- ✓ Gait instability
- ✓ Weakness
- ✓ Abnormality of gait
- ✓ Difficulty walking
- ✓ SOB on exertion
- ✓ Pain
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Deconditioned

Examples of objective measurements include, manual muscle testing, range of motion, oxygen saturation, etc.