

**ASHT Payer Repository**  
**Case Study on Custom Fabricated Orthotics (L-Codes)**

**Issue:**

Following a policy change by Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maine (BCBS), occupational therapists and physical therapists were uncertain about the coverage of custom fabricated orthotics. BCBS issued an amendment to the Professional Agreement between Occupational Therapists/Physical Therapists and Anthem Health Plans of Maine detailing a change in the fee schedule for certain therapy services. Occupational therapists were unsure whether the policy changes applied to custom fabricated orthotics because the amendment did not mention the HCPCS Level II “L” codes that are usually used with them. The amendment did cover CPT therapy codes, including the 29000 series of codes, but these codes correspond with cast applications/splinting secondary to fractures rather than custom fabricated orthotics. Upon further inquiry, occupational therapists discovered that following the policy change, BCBS only covered custom fabricated orthotics provided by orthotists, not by occupational therapists. ASHT President Stacey Doyon rightfully felt that custom fabricated orthotics were essential to her work as an occupational and hand therapist, and appealed to BCBS to reconsider the policy change. Many others as well as patients joined her in the effort.

**Background:**

Occupational therapists/physical therapists depend on custom fabricated orthotics to help treat their patients. Because they treat a wide range of injuries, OT/PT’s must tailor orthotics to their patients’ needs, which includes day-to-day living, regaining physical abilities after an injury, and recuperating from surgery, to name a few. OT/PT’s not only provide orthotics, they decide which orthotic is best for the situation, fit it to the patient and the situation, train the patient to use it, and provide support if the patient has questions or difficulties. Orthotists, on the other hand, generally only provide orthotics and have little other interaction with the patients. Custom fabricated orthotics are critical because no two patients or problems are alike, so OT/PT’s need to adjust orthotics accordingly. Orthotics made of low temperature materials are the preferred devices because they are easy to adjust to a patient both initially and as the therapy progresses. These are the custom fabricated orthotics in question. Orthotics made of high temperature materials are often uncomfortable and limiting for the patient.

**Course of Action:**

A lack of coverage for custom fabricated orthotics would not allow hand therapists to provide the best care for their patients. Stacey joined other OT/PT’s as well as patients in writing letters expressing concern to Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield Provider Network Management. Stacey presented the problem, providing background of the issue and two case scenarios illustrating her argument demonstrating the necessity of custom fabricated orthotics provided by occupational therapy/physical therapy profession.

**Outcome/Solution:**

BCBS hired an OT and PT as consultants to look at the issue further. Then in October of 2006 they changed the policy back to allow PT and OT’s to provide custom made orthotics.