

ORTHOPEDIC ORTHOSIS AND SUPPORTS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook updates Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures for providing orthopedic braces and supports to veteran beneficiaries.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:** This VHA Handbook updates current procedures.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Directive 1173, and VHA Handbooks 1173.1 through 1173.15.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Chief Consultant, Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service Strategic Healthcare Group (113), is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook. Questions may be referred to 202-273-8515.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Manual M-2, Part IX, Chapter 10 is rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of July 2005.

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ORTHOPEDIC ORTHOSES AND SUPPORTS

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes uniform and consistent Departmental procedures for providing orthopedic orthoses and supports to veteran beneficiaries.

2. DEFINITIONS

a. **Orthosis.** An orthosis is a device fitted externally to an anatomical portion of the body to influence motion by assisting, resisting, blocking, or unloading part of the body weight. It includes, but is not limited to, orthosis, corsets, trusses, and belts.

b. **Custom Orthosis.** A custom orthosis is made from specific measurements and cast of a patient.

c. **Prefabricated Orthosis.** A prefabricated orthosis is an orthotic device that is commercially-manufactured in quantities for public issue.

d. **VA Orthotic Laboratory.** A Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) orthotic laboratory is a VA laboratory within the Prosthetic Service staffed with an orthotist and/or prosthetist, equipped to provide orthotic and/or prosthetic appliances.

e. **Commercial Vendor.** A commercial vendor is an independent business which manufactures custom-made orthotic appliances or custom fits prefabricated orthotic appliances.

f. **Orthotist.** An orthotist is a trained professional in the fabrication and fitting of orthoses.

g. **Prosthetist.** A prosthetist is a trained professional in the fabrication and fitting of prostheses.

h. **Prosthesis.** A prosthesis an artificial device used to replace a missing anatomical part of the body.

i. **CAD/CAM.** Computer Aided Design and/or Computer Aided Manufacture.

3. GENERAL PROCEDURES

a. Medically prescribed orthotic and/or prosthetic appliances and/or repairs will be provided in a timely and efficient manner to beneficiaries who are eligible for prosthetic services.

b. Upon receipt of a prescription, an evaluation of the patient by the orthotist and/or prosthetist will determine the appropriate orthotic and/or prosthetic appliance.

c. If requested by a therapist or a patient, a consult will be made back to the primary care physician or designee where applicable.

d. VA Orthotic Laboratories will provide orthotic and/or prosthetic appliances and repairs to beneficiaries to the fullest extent possible. At facilities not having access to an Orthotic Laboratory or where its workload is such that the Orthotic Laboratory cannot provide prompt

service, local contracts will be awarded to private contractors for procurement. Contract appliances must be of high quality and are to be inspected by the Prosthetic representative, or designee, upon completion and delivery.

e. Within the limitation of the storage area provided to the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) and Orthotic Laboratory, an inventory of the more frequently requested prefabricated orthotic appliances will be stocked for immediate issue to eligible beneficiaries. The local medical staff prescribing prosthetic and/or orthotic appliances should be kept informed of the immediate availability of these items.

f. Facilities requiring the services of a VA Orthotic Laboratory located at another facility must schedule and obtain confirmation of an appointment prior to referring beneficiaries to the laboratory in order to avoid delays and backlogs in the Orthotic Laboratory's treatment schedule.

g. No work shall be accomplished in a VA Orthotic Laboratory except upon receipt of a properly prepared VA Form 10-2529-3, Request and Receipt for Prosthetic Appliances or Services, or VA Form 10-2431, Request for Prosthetic Services, in electronic or hard copy.

(1) When an appliance or repair is authorized, VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) will be prepared and the original and a copy will be forwarded by the most expeditious means to the Orthotic Laboratory selected. A VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) will be prepared for each beneficiary for whom an appliance is to be fabricated or repaired. More than one appliance for the same beneficiary may be included on a single request form. A copy of the VA Form 2529-3 (ADP) will be retained in suspense in the PSAS pending delivery of the appliance.

(2) Upon receipt of a VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) for an appliance or repair, the Orthotic Laboratory will take the following action:

(a) An automatic "Work Order Number" will be assigned and entered under item 5 on the job record section of the original VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP), and the same number will be entered under item 19 on the electronic 10-2529-3 (ADP).

(b) The beneficiary's name, Social Security Number (SSN), work order number, and date received will be entered in items 1 through 6 in the job record section on the reverse of the original VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP). The form will then be referred to the technician assigned to fabricate or repair the appliance. A copy of the VA Form 10-2529-3 will be retained in the "Work in Progress (Suspense) File." If measurements are required, arrangements will be made by the Orthotic Laboratory staff, or designee, to have the beneficiary report to the Orthotic Laboratory. The date the measurements are taken will be entered in item 10 on the original job record section, or in item 10 on electronic VA Form 10-2529-3.

(c) All working time spent on the specific job by one or more technicians and all materials used will be entered in the appropriate spaces on the original job record section as the work progresses, or upon completion.

(d) Upon completion of the job, the original VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) and the appliance will be reviewed by the Chief, Orthotic Laboratory, for inspection and completion of the job record. The date the job is completed will be entered under item 8 of the job record section, and the name of the technician who completed the job will be entered under item 9 or item 14 on electronic VA Form 10-2529-3.

(e) The Prosthetic representative, or designee, will inspect each completed job and will sign item 10 on the original job record section, indicating that adherence to prescription and quality of materials and craftsmanship has been maintained in the fabrication or repair of the appliance or item 22 on electronic VA Form 10-2529-3.

(f) The Prosthetic representative, or designee, will be responsible for computing as accurately as possible the actual cost of materials and labor listed on the job record section item 10. The total costs of labor and materials will be entered in dollars and cents in Section 10. *NOTE: This figure represents the total prime cost of the appliance(s) and repairs.*

(g) If the completed appliance or repair is to be returned to the requesting VA facility, a copy of VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP), will be removed from the "Work in Progress (Suspense) file;" the total prime cost of the appliance(s) is entered under item 10 on the front of the form; and the appliance, together with a copy of the VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP), will be forwarded directly to the Prosthetic representative or the prosthetic clerk at the requesting facility. The requesting facility will have responsibility for follow-up.

(h) If the completed appliance or repair is delivered directly to the beneficiary by the VA Orthotic Laboratory, the following procedures will apply:

(1) Item 20, "Date Delivered," will be completed on both the original and the duplicate of VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP).

(2) Item 22 on VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) may be completed by the Chief, Orthotic Laboratory, or designee, for repairs to appliances, or minor new appliances which are not custom-fitted to the beneficiary. If the appliance is custom fitted, the Chief, Orthotic Laboratory, or designee, may arrange for inspection by a physician if requested or indicated.

(3) The top box under item 23 will be checked and the veteran will be asked to sign both the original and a copy of the VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) under item 24. The appliance will then be given to the veteran.

(4) The total prime cost of the appliance(s) or repair(s) will be entered under the "Total Cost" column in item 10 on the front of a copy of VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP), and the form will then be forwarded directly to the Prosthetic representative, or the prosthetic clerk, at the requesting facility.

(i) Whenever a VA Orthotic Laboratory desires work to be done by another VA Orthotic Laboratory, the requesting laboratory will prepare VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) in the usual manner and will forward the original and copy to the laboratory where work is to be done. The procedure for processing such requests in the receiving laboratory is essentially the same as that outlined above except that entries for the job record section of VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) will be completed on all copies, and the totals only for labor costs and material costs will be entered on the top line in the job record section on the original of VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP). The original of the form will then be returned to the requesting laboratory, together with the appliance or setup requested.

(j) Whenever a veteran presents a VA Form 10-2501, Prosthetic Service Card (PSC) to a VA Orthotic Laboratory and is furnished repairs, the Chief, Orthotic Laboratory, or designee, will be responsible for preparing VA Form 10-2529-3 (ADP) to cover the required repairs.

4. REPAIRS TO ORTHOTIC APPLIANCES

a. Repairs to orthoses may be obtained through local sources on the authority of VA Form 10-2501, VA Form 10-2421 (ADP), Prosthetic Authorization for Items or Services, VA Form 10-2529 (ADP) series, or credit card order.

b. Repairs to all other orthotic devices, for which PSCs may not be issued, will be obtained through local sources utilizing VA Forms 10-2421 (ADP) or 10-2529 (ADP) series or credit card order.

c. Orthotic appliances may be repaired if the cost of the repair is less than one-half the cost of replacement. The Prosthetics representative, or designee, will determine whether it is more practical, from an economic point of view, to repair or replace the appliance.

d. **Eligibility Considerations**

(1) Beneficiaries with continuing eligibility will be issued a PSC upon initial issue of a prosthesis and/or orthosis. The PSC pre-authorizes commercial repairs to the orthosis and/or prosthesis or mobility aid listed thereon not to exceed the dollar limitation. Repairs exceeding the cost limitation may be approved by telephone with a follow-up repair authorization (see Form Letter (FL) 10-55, Authorization to Repair Prosthetic Appliances) by the Prosthetics representative, or designee.

(2) Beneficiaries receiving prosthetic services under Eligibility Reform Public Law 104-262 will be authorized repairs to their prosthetic and/or orthotic appliance when the repair is prescribed by the physician, or Prosthetics representative, as required to treat the medical condition for which the appliance was prescribed.

5. REPLACEMENT ORTHOTIC BRACES AND SUPPORTS

a. Orthotic appliances issued to eligible beneficiaries will be replaced only after the Prosthetics representative determines that the appliance is no longer suitable or that it is unserviceable for continued use due to fair wear and tear, or there are changes in the veteran's medical condition. Appliances in serviceable condition will continue to be in use, regardless of age, if suitable for the beneficiary's medical care. The possibility of further useful life through repair will always be determined before a new appliance is authorized.

b. If a beneficiary claims that an orthotic and/or prosthetic appliance is lost or destroyed, or it is determined by examination that the appliance has been damaged through other than fair wear and tear, the Prosthetics representative, or designee, may cause an inquiry to be made into the facts of the case.