

TennCare LTSS Operational Protocol: Enabling Technology Screening, Acquisition, and Reporting for Home- and Community-Based Service Programs

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A. Background

TennCare defines Enabling Technology (ET) as equipment or methodologies that support an individual's increased independence in their home, community, and workplace. ET is a benefit available to individuals receiving home- and community-based services (HCBS) in the CHOICES, Employment and Community First (ECF) CHOICES, and 1915(c) waiver programs. The service covers the purchase or lease of equipment required by the individual to maintain or increase their functional capacity to perform daily tasks, as well as the cost of shipping, installation, training, and repair of equipment purchased using the ET benefit. Examples of ET equipment include, but are not limited to:

- Motion sensors,
- Bed and/or chair sensors,
- Live or on-demand audio and/or video technology systems,
- Pressure sensors,
- Automated medication dispensers,
- Mobile software applications that guide independent task completion through images, audio, or video instruction,
- GPS guidance systems,
- Wearable and virtual technologies, and
- Smart technology devices and fixtures that support independent communication and environmental control and safety.

The ET benefit also covers the purchase or lease of technology systems that allow the individual to receive remote supports from support staff, coaches, and natural supports. Remote support systems often include two-way communication so that off-site supports can interact with and provide guidance to the individual, as well as actively respond to the individual's needs or coordinate in-person supports, as required. Utilization of remote supports enables service providers to adjust staffing levels and provide individuals with increased independence, while also ensuring their health and safety. Specific requirements related to providers and the use of remote supports are outlined in Section D.

B. Policy

The ET benefit may be used by individuals receiving HCBS through the CHOICES, ECF CHOICES, and 1915(c) waiver programs. Enabling technology devices or systems that are purchased or leased with the ET benefit must be based on an assessed need as determined through the comprehensive needs assessment and person-centered planning process. The ET benefit may not be used to purchase devices or systems for the purposes of monitoring, tracking, or restricting the individual's activities.

ET benefit limits are specific to each of the HCBS programs, as outlined in the tables below:

- [CHOICES Benefits Table](#)
- [ECF CHOICES Benefits Table](#)
- [1915\(c\) Waivers Benefits Table](#)

Per Section A.2.6.1.9.1.7 of the TennCare Managed Care Organization (MCO) Contractor Risk Agreement (CRA), expenditures for enabling technology devices or systems may only exceed the stated benefit limits for individuals receiving CHOICES, ECF CHOICES, or 1915(c) waiver services if the expenditures are determined to be a cost-effective alternative to the following:

- Care in a nursing facility (NF) or intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICF/IID), if the individual meets the requirements for such care;
- Additional hours of personal assistance or other HCBS that would otherwise be covered and medically necessary, including covered home health services; or
- A higher level of reimbursement that would otherwise be provided for residential services.

The Department of Disability and Aging (DDA) is responsible for developing and implementing processes and tools to be used by Independent Support Coordinators and DDA Case Managers to screen, assess, authorize and obtain ET for individuals receiving 1915(c) waiver services. The MCOs are responsible for developing and implementing TennCare-approved processes and tools to be used by Care and Support Coordinators for individuals receiving CHOICES or ECF CHOICES services, respectively. Any significant changes to MCO ET processes and tools must be reviewed and approved by TennCare prior to implementation.

Coordinator Responsibilities Related to Enabling Technology

All MCO Care and Support Coordinators for CHOICES and ECF CHOICES, respectively, and Independent Support Coordinators and DDA Case Managers for 1915(c) waivers (collectively referred to hereafter as “Coordinators”) are responsible for supporting utilization of the ET benefit, as follows:

- Educating individuals receiving HCBS about the ET benefit and how technology can be used to support increased independence, opportunities for community integration and employment, and goal achievement;
- Conducting initial and ongoing assessments of how ET can support the individual's needs and goals outlined in the person-centered planning process; and
- Planning and facilitation of ET supports, which may include but is not limited to referrals to ET providers, procurement of ET devices and systems, and follow-up to ensure ET is effectively implemented and meets the individual's needs.

Additional information regarding these responsibilities is outlined in Section C of this protocol.

Enabling Technology Training Requirements

All Coordinators must complete the Enabling Technology Fundamentals training modules in Relias, as well as participate in enabling technology training conducted by their organization. Coordinators may be required to complete additional ET training, as directed by TennCare and DDA. Completion of required ET training will be monitored by the Coordinator's training supervisor.

Providers that support individuals who use enabling technology and remote support providers must complete all trainings as outlined on the [Enabling Technology Training Requirements for Staff Categories](#) grid found on the DDA website.

C. Protocol

1. Coordinators shall conduct a screening or assessment to determine interest in, as well as need and readiness for, enabling technology for all individuals receiving HCBS through the CHOICES, ECF CHOICES, and 1915(c) waiver programs. Screenings/assessments shall be completed with the individual receiving services and their Circle of Support (CoS) using TennCare or DDA approved tools, as applicable, upon initial program enrollment and at least annually thereafter as part of the comprehensive needs assessment and person-centered planning process.

If an HCBS provider conducts an independent ET screening or assessment with an individual for whom they are providing services, the outcome of the screening or assessment should be shared with the CoS during the person-centered planning meeting. The CoS shall determine the appropriateness of adding enabling technology to the individual's person-centered support plan (PCSP) based on their assessed needs, goals, budget, and/or other relevant factors.

2. If the screening/assessment indicates the individual and/or their CoS is interested in or would benefit from additional education or discussion about enabling technology, Coordinators shall offer the following options:
 - Direct the individual and their CoS to the [Enabling Technology page](#) on DDA's website where they can view demonstration videos of enabling technology devices and software and read success stories from members using enabling technology;
 - Direct the individual and their CoS to the [TN Tech Connect](#) page on the TN Disability Pathfinder website for a guided exploration through a directory of assistive and enabling technology services for the disability community;
 - Schedule an in-person or virtual demonstration with an enabling technology provider;
 - Schedule a tour at one of the Enabling Technology Model Homes for personal hands-on experience with technology solutions and devices; and/or
 - Contact a DDA or MCO Technology Champion, as applicable, for consultation and/or additional recommendations for educational opportunities.

Following provision of additional education, the Coordinator may conduct a follow-up screening/assessment, if requested by the individual, to identify needs and interests for enabling technology supports.

3. If the screening/assessment indicates the individual needs and is interested in obtaining and using enabling technology, Coordinators will follow the approved enabling technology referral, authorization, and procurement process, as applicable for their program/organization. If authorization for a requested enabling technology device or system is denied, DDA or the MCO (as applicable) shall follow the requirements for the Notice of Adverse Benefit Determinations, including providing the individual with appeals information, as outlined in 1200-13-13-.11 of the TennCare Rules and Regulations.

4. Enabling technology purchased or leased using the HCBS program benefit should be documented in the Services section of the individual's PCSP. One-time expenditures, such as purchasing of a smart home device, may be removed once the item has been purchased and installed; items requiring ongoing expenditures, such as devices being leased or software requiring a subscription, should remain on the PCSP for the duration of use.
5. The Coordinator shall conduct a follow-up review of the individual's current enabling technology solutions as part of the annual comprehensive needs assessment and person-centered planning process. At minimum, this review should include discussion on the following topics:
 - Whether the individual is regularly using their enabling technology device or system,
 - The condition and/or functionality of the device or system (e.g., is it working as it should or are repairs/replacements needed),
 - If the device or system is meeting the individual's needs and/or helping them achieve their goals, or
 - Whether the individual or their CoS require additional training or support using the device or system.

It is also recommended that Coordinators conduct periodic follow-up discussions with the individual regarding their current enabling technology solutions during regularly scheduled Coordinator contact, particularly during the first year of the device or system's implementation.

6. DDA and the MCOs shall submit quarterly ET reports using a reporting template provided or approved by TennCare. Reports shall be submitted via TOPS no later than 30 days following the end of the previous quarter.

D. Additional Requirements for Remote Supports

1. Coordinators shall ensure that PCSPs for individuals receiving remote supports contain back-up and emergency preparedness plans that include the following:
 - 24-hour emergency contact information for remote support equipment that becomes damaged or is no longer functioning properly,
 - A plan for back-up supports—either paid or unpaid—if remote support equipment is not working or remote support staff are not available.
 - Transporting remote support equipment, if needed, and notifying the remote support provider if the individual must evacuate to a new location.
2. Remote support providers shall comply with all requirements for reporting abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other reportable events involving individuals receiving services, as outlined in the [Reportable Event Management Operational Protocol](#).

E. Contacts

- [Department of Disability and Aging](#)
- [BlueCare](#)
- [UnitedHealthcare](#)

- [Wellpoint](#)

F. References

TennCare and DDA Interagency Agreement for I/DD MLTSS Programs: Section A.87

[MCO Statewide Contractor Risk Agreement \(CRA\)](#)

- Cost Effective Alternatives: Section A.2.6.1.9.1.7
- Coordinator Responsibilities: A. 2.9.7.1.4.1; A.2.9.7.5.2.5.1; and A.2.9.7.5.2.5.1

TennCare Rules and Regulations: 1200-13-13-.11