

ORTHOTIC DEVICES AND REPAIRS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook updates Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures for providing orthotic devices to veteran beneficiaries.

2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES. This VHA Handbook updates current procedures for providing orthotic devices and repairs.

3. RELATED ISSUES. VHA Directive 1173, and VHA Handbooks 1173.1, through 1173.9, and 1173.11, through 1173.15,

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE. The Chief Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics Officer (10FP) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook. Questions may be referred to (202) 254-0440.

5. RESCISSIONS. VHA Handbook 1173.10, dated November 2, 2000, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION. This VHA Handbook is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of January 2013.

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DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 1/30/2008
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mail 1/30/2008

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ORTHOTIC DEVICES AND REPAIRS

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook establishes uniform and consistent Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures for providing orthotic devices and repairs 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. An orthosis may be used to correct deformity, compensate for weakness, or protect a body segment. It includes, but is not limited to custom and non-custom devices, corsets, trusses, and belts.

b. **Custom Orthosis.** A custom orthosis is made from measurements, tracings, a digitized body segment from a negative impression (cast), or may incorporate a unique design based on specific patient measurements.

c. **Prefabricated Orthosis.** A prefabricated orthosis (also referred to as an off-the-shelf orthoses) is an orthotic device that is commercially manufactured in quantities for public issue in a limited number of sizes.

d. **VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory.** The VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory is a section within the Prosthetic Service staffed with a Certified Orthotist or non-certified staff under the supervision of a certified practitioner, equipped to provide a range of custom orthotic or custom fitted orthotic devices.

e. **Contract Provider.** A contract provider refers to an independent business that fabricates and/or fits custom-made orthotic devices, or custom fits prefabricated orthotic devices.

f. **Certified Orthotist.** A Certified Orthotist is a trained professional that designs, fabricates, and fits custom and non-custom orthoses.

g. **Orthotic Fitter.** An orthotic fitter is an individual trained to fit non-custom orthotic devices and/or soft goods (i.e., lumbosacral corsets, elastic knee orthoses, ankle and elbow supports).

h. **Orthotic Technician.** An orthotic technician is an individual trained to fabricate custom orthoses under the supervision of a Certified Orthotist.

i. **Orthotic Laboratory Workorder (OWL).** An OWL is a work order for custom fabrication and/or repairs made to orthotic devices by an in-house VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory.

3. PROCEDURES

a. Medically prescribed orthotic devices and repairs must 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 determines the appropriate orthotic device and/or service.

c. The VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory must provide orthotic devices and repairs to beneficiaries to the fullest extent possible. At facilities not having access to the VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory or where the laboratory's workload is such that the Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory cannot provide prompt service, local contracts are to be awarded to private contractors for procurement. Contract devices must be of high quality and are to be inspected by the Chief, Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory, Orthotist designee, or Orthotic Clinic within 30 days of delivery.

d. The Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) and the Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory need to maintain an inventory of the more frequently requested prefabricated orthotic appliances and soft goods that are stocked for immediate issue to eligible beneficiaries. The local medical staff prescribing these items is to be kept informed of their immediate availability. *NOTE: In accordance with a memorandum from the Chief Prosthetics and Clinical Logistics Officer, the maximum level of inventory on hand is not to exceed 30 days or 1 percent of the allotted yearly budget.*

e. Facilities requiring the services of a VA 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 and Prosthetic Laboratory's treatment schedule.

f. When a custom device or repair is authorized by a Prosthetic Request (using the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS)), and is to be done at the VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory, an OWL is created to document all components, materials, and labor used. Upon completion of the job and delivery of the device, the OWL is completed and a CPRS progress note is entered in the patient's record.

g. Within the OWL Business Practice Guidelines, when a prefabricated orthosis is fitted by the VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory, the item fitted is to come from "stock issue," and there is no need to create an OWL. The Orthotist must document in a CPRS progress note, all work done and the instructions given to the patient for care and maintenance of the fitted device. Additionally, the electronic consult and/or suspense note are to be closed upon issuance of the device to the patient.

h. Within the OWL Business Practice Guidelines, when a custom appliance or repair is authorized, an OWL must be prepared and the original and a copy forwarded, by the most expeditious means, to the VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory selected. An OWL must be prepared for each beneficiary for whom an appliance is to be custom fabricated or repaired. If

the patient is to receive more than one custom appliance, an OWL needs to be created for each custom item or repair. Once the OWL is closed, this must be posted to the patient's record.

i. Upon receipt of an OWL for a custom appliance or repair, the Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory must take the following action:

(1) A "Work Order Number" is automatically assigned during the creation of the OWL work order and can be used to track the progress of the job.

(2) All information on the OWL must be checked for accuracy and the item or services to be furnished, based on the CPRS Consult.

(3) All working time spent on the specific job by one or more practitioners or technicians and all materials used must be entered in the appropriate sections of the OWL (Materials and Labor Sections) record section as the work progresses or upon completion.

(4) Upon completion of the job, the appliance must be reviewed and inspected by the Chief, Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory, or Lead Prosthetist or Orthotist, to ensure the accuracy, fit and function of the device. The OWL is then completed and a CPRS progress note is posted to the patient's record.

(5) The Chief, Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory, Lead Prosthetist, Orthotist, or designated practitioner, is responsible for computing, as accurately as possible, the actual cost of materials and labor.

(6) If the completed device or repair is to be returned to the requesting VA facility (another station), a copy of the OWL is sent to that station indicating all work done and associated costs for materials and labor. The requesting facility has the responsibility for follow-up.

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

(a) The date delivered must be completed on the OWL.

(b) The OWL automatically totals material and labor costs as this information is posted to the OWL.

(8) When a VA Orthotic and Prosthetic Laboratory request that work be done by another VA Orthotic or Prosthetic Laboratory involving custom fabrication, the requesting laboratory must prepare the OWL and forward it to the laboratory where the work is to be done. The procedure for processing such requests in the receiving laboratory is essentially the same as that outlined in subparagraph 3i.

(9) When a veteran presents a VA Form 10-2501, Prosthetic Service Card (PSC), to an authorized contract provider (commercial orthotic facility) of their choice, to have repairs made to their appliance, the commercial Orthotic facility submits the invoice for payment to PSAS, who then makes payment using a credit card. **NOTE:** VA Form 10-2501 authorizes a specific

amount for repairs, and to exceed this amount, requires the prior authorization by VA Prosthetic Representative, or designee.

(10) The Orthotist must enter a progress note into the CPRS, which documents all work that was done during a specific appointment for a patient (i.e., casting, fitting, repair, instructions, etc.).

4. REPAIRS TO ORTHOTIC DEVICES

a. Repairs to orthoses may be obtained through local sources on the authority of VA Form 10-2501, (see subpar. 3i(9)).

b. Orthotic devices may be repaired if the cost of the repair is less than one-half the cost of replacement. The Prosthetics Representative, or designee, determines whether it is more practical, from an economic point of view, to repair or replace the appliance.

c. **Eligibility Considerations.** Eligible beneficiaries must be issued a PSC upon initial issue of an orthosis. The PSC pre-authorizes commercial repairs to the orthosis listed thereon not to exceed the dollar limitation, as previously described in subparagraph 3i(9). Repairs exceeding the cost limitation may be approved by telephone with a follow-up for repair authorization to the Chief, or designee.

5. REPLACEMENT TO ORTHOTIC DEVICES

a. Orthotic devices issued to eligible beneficiaries are 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 continue to be in use, regardless of age, if suitable for the beneficiary's medical care. The possibility of further useful life through repair must always be determined before a new appliance is authorized.

b. If a beneficiary claims that an orthotic 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 make a full inquiry into the facts of the case, and make a decision to replace the device based on the facts of the inquiry.

6. ISSUANCE OF DUPLICATE ORTHOSIS OR SOFT GOODS

If the beneficiary's medical condition, environmental conditions, or work-related needs warrant the issuance of a duplicate device, the Prosthetic Representative or designee, is authorized to do so at the Prosthetic Representative's discretion.