

SAMPLE LETTER  
MEDICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR A PEDIATRIC POWER WHEELCHAIR WITH  
ACCESSORIES

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your CSZ  
Your email address

Date

Name  
Address  
CSZ

Re: Mackenzie Doe's Request for Medicaid Prior Approval - Power Wheelchair and Accessories

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to obtain Medicaid Prior Approval for a pediatric power wheelchair with accessories for my patient Mackenzie Doe, a 24-month-old child with undiagnosed idiopathic gross motor abnormalities affecting proper muscular development in her upper and lower extremities, trunk, and neck.

I am a physical therapist, licensed in New York State and have been practicing for two years. I work at the Sheldon Institute, a school that focuses on the educational, social, and health needs of children with disabilities. My supervisor, Tiffany Morgan, is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and a RESNA-certified Assistive Technology Professional. She has been practicing for more than 20 years dealing primarily with pediatrics from birth to age 12. Ms. Morgan oversees all facets of my daily work with Mackenzie, and provides me with both practical and medical experience which allows me to give Mackenzie and her family the best possible advice for her care plan.

**Mackenzie Doe's Background and Medical Condition**

I have worked with Mackenzie for the last 18 months. She was a full term baby with no complications. Around three months she began showing muscle fatigue, which has gotten worse over the last 21 months, but seems to be slowing in its progression. Mackenzie shows no cognitive delay and responds appropriately to sounds, toys, people, food, and other stimulus. She is extremely petite for her age, cannot sit up without assistance, attempts to roll and combat crawl as a means of ambulation, but fatigues easily. Mackenzie cannot lift her arms above her

head. When her arms are supported she can use her hands to grab her favorite stuffed animal, feed herself finger foods, and make music using her piano.

Mackenzie receives physical and occupational therapy daily for 30 minute sessions. As her physical therapist, I work on her range of motion for her upper and lower extremities, balance, and muscle and trunk strength. Mackenzie is a quick learner and is eager to try new skill sets that she works on in her therapy. Mackenzie also sees a speech therapist twice a week for 30 minutes to work on her speech and swallowing.

Mackenzie presents with the same cognitive capacity as her peers, has an interest in her surroundings, shows appropriate responses to stimuli, and has a supportive family. In consultation with my supervisor, Ms. Morgan, it is my professional opinion that a pediatric power wheelchair with a seat elevator is medically necessary for Mackenzie. A pediatric power wheelchair with a seat elevator will not only ameliorate the effect her condition has on her gross motor delay, it is also medically necessary to correct how her condition has affected her overall development.

### **Mackenzie has the Cognitive Capacity to Learn to Use a Power Wheelchair in a Safe Effective Manner**

Mackenzie presents as a happy toddler, very interested in her surroundings, and extremely sociable with other children her own age and her family. Vocally, she is extremely expressive and enjoys learning new vocabulary. Mackenzie knows most of her basic colors, can recite numbers one through five in a correct order, and shows a basic understanding of concepts like “more” or “take away.” When Mackenzie wishes to move from one place to another, she starts by combat crawling in the direction she wishes to go, stops and rests, and then will either roll or resume combat crawling to her desired location. She knows that she must rest in order to get where she wishes to be, but does not lose focus on her destination. She is constantly showing her determination to achieve every day goals like her peers. From Mackenzie’s presentation, I can see that she is starting to develop an understanding of abstract concepts, will acquire necessary receptive and expressive language skills to articulate needs, has the ability to understand motor planning for functional mobility, and has the necessary desire to acquire new skill sets. Therefore, I believe that Mackenzie has the cognitive capacity to learn how to safely use a power wheelchair and will continue to refine her skills as she gets older.

### **Mackenzie Needs a Pediatric Power Wheelchair for Functional Mobility**

Mackenzie receives physical and occupational therapy daily for 30 minute sessions. My goal for Mackenzie is to try to keep as much muscle strength as possible in her arms and legs, and her trunk and neck. While her condition appears to be slowing, she has sustained sufficient muscle loss in her legs leading me to believe that she will not be able to use her own legs for functional ambulation in the near future, if ever. Therefore, at this time it appears that Mackenzie will need a power wheelchair for functional mobility.

Presently, Mackenzie’s family is using a store bought stroller to provide ambulation. However, this stroller does not provide the proper head, neck and trunk support that is medically necessary for Mackenzie. Additionally, Mackenzie is not learning how to adapt to her environment in a wheelchair with family constantly pushing her from place to place. I have also considered a manual wheelchair for Mackenzie that could be fitted with proper positioning

devices to provide the necessary support for Mackenzie's head, neck, and trunk, but she would still need to be pushed from place to place because she does not have the strength necessary to push a manual wheelchair.

I have also taken into consideration the fact that even though Mackenzie has a developmental disability, she is cognitively on par with her peers, and it is medically necessary for her cognitive and physical abilities to be supported and allowed to continue to develop. This means that Mackenzie will need the proper devices that will help her to achieve her developmental milestones. Independent functional motor development affects all developmental milestones. A power wheelchair is medically necessary for a child Mackenzie's age because it will allow for the development of motor planning skills, hand to eye coordination, social and emotional development, the use of her fine motor skills, and the use of language. For example, Mackenzie will learn how to navigate hallways, furniture in rooms, and turning through doorways. As she gets more proficient in motor planning, she will become more proficient with the use of her wheelchair-- learning how to navigate people in rooms, sidewalks, and store aisles. As she is learning how to navigate she will also be developing her use of her drive mechanism, in this case, a joy stick that is more sensitive to her touch. This familiarity with her joy stick and her motor planning skills will allow her to both introduce herself to appropriate childhood situations such as school activities and playtime, but it will also allow her to remove herself from overwhelming or unsafe situations. In all of these situations, Mackenzie will be learning and developing in the same manner as a child without a disability.

I have evaluated Mackenzie in a number of power wheelchairs and have decided that the best fit for her age and medical needs would be the \_\_\_\_\_ made by \_\_\_\_\_. I have chosen this model because: of its programmable controls; its maneuverability both indoors and outside; it can support a variety of driving controls; it can accommodate aftermarket seating; the frame is capable of growing which will allow for continued years of use as Mackenzie grows; and the system is extensively customizable.

### **Mackenzie will need the Following Accessories:**

#### *Power Adjustable Seat Height*

Because Mackenzie has weak arms, she cannot lift them against the force of gravity. She can however reach out on a table or other flat surface and pull objects closer to her when her arms are supported. In order for Mackenzie to do this she will need to be at the same height as the surface where the object is resting. The ability to reach an object or an activity, such as food or hand washing, leads to independence in many activities of daily living. While our school is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, Mackenzie will still need to adapt to many surfaces and situations that are not covered by the ADA in order to be able to fully integrate into all of her customary environments.

#### *Attendant Control*

Mackenzie is two-years-old and has many capabilities, but is also learning new skill sets. Much like a child without a disability, from time to time she will need parental intervention. Because her wheelchair will feature an extremely sensitive joy stick designed especially to ameliorate her weak upper extremity condition it would not be safe for her parents, teachers, or others to attempt to use this joy stick to control the power wheelchair. The attendant control will allow for another means to steer the wheelchair. Also, if Mackenzie becomes fatigued during the day, is

sick, or her wheelchair must be driven by her family, such as, getting the wheelchair into the family van, the attendant control will allow her care givers to steer the wheelchair.

#### *Other Wheelchair Accessories*

Mackenzie will need a variety of other accessories to make her wheelchair medically appropriate. The following list will identify each accessory and its medical need. (Each accessory must be identified and justified.)

#### **Less Costly Alternatives**

With regard to less costly alternatives for Mackenzie, I considered all aspects of her healthcare and not just other pieces of equipment.

First, even though Mackenzie has a life altering physical condition, it does not affect her brain. Therefore, Mackenzie needs to have the opportunity to develop as close to her peers as can be expected. Because she would constantly need to be pushed by another, a manual wheelchair or a stroller will not allow for her to develop and exercise her executive functioning skills. Decisions will be made by those pushing her. Simply put, this means Mackenzie will learn to be helpless and believe that she should rely on others to meet her daily needs. As a result, Mackenzie will likely be dependent on aides continually for the rest of her life. Continuous aide services can be costly.

Second, a manual wheelchair is medically contraindicated. Mackenzie will not be able to independently use it in all of her customary environments. For the same reason, an adapted stroller is not appropriate.

Third, other pediatric power wheelchair bases cost the same as the device I am requesting, but manufacturers' price out their accessories differently. The entire cost of the requested wheelchair with many of the accessories does not vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. However, not all manufacturers offer the same warranty and/or guarantee that comes with this device.

Fourth, the device comes with a seat elevation system that I believe is medically necessary to ameliorate her condition and assist with her development. This feature is not offered on other wheelchairs that I evaluated.

Therefore, based on my evaluation and professional expertise, and with continual input from my supervisor, I believe this pediatric power wheelchair with seat elevator, attendant controls and other accessories is medically necessary for Mackenzie Doe and that Medicaid provide prior approval for the requested device.

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Title/Credentials