

Part 199.5

TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO)

Revision: C-1, September 29, 2017

Rule: Interim Final Rule/FR Vol 82, No 188

(a) General. (1) The TRICARE ECHO is essentially a supplemental program to the TRICARE Basic Program. It does not provide acute care nor benefits available through the TRICARE Basic Program.

(2) The purpose of the ECHO is to provide an additional financial resource for an integrated set of services and supplies designed to assist in the reduction of the disabling effects of the ECHO-eligible dependent's qualifying condition. Services include those necessary to maintain, minimize or prevent deterioration of function of an ECHO-eligible dependent.

(3) The Government's cost-share for ECHO or ECHO home health benefits during any program year is limited as stated in this section. In order to transition the program year from a fiscal year to a calendar year basis, the Government's annual cost-share limitation specified in paragraph (f) of this section shall be prorated for the last quarter of calendar year 2018 as authorized by 10 U.S.C. 1079(f)(2)(A).

(b) Eligibility. (1) The following categories of TRICARE/CHAMPUS beneficiaries with a qualifying condition are ECHO-eligible dependents:

(i) A spouse, child, or unmarried person (as described in Sec. 199.3(b)(2)(i), (b)(2)(ii), or (b)(2)(iv)) of a member of the Uniformed Services on active duty for a period of more than 30 days.

(ii) An abused dependent as described in Sec. 199.3(b)(2)(iii).

(iii) A spouse, child, or unmarried person (as described in Sec. 199.3(b)(2)(i), (b)(2)(ii), or (b)(2)(iv)), of a member of the Uniformed Services who dies while on active duty for a period of more than 30 days and whose death occurs on or after October 7, 2001. In such case, an eligible surviving spouse remains eligible for benefits under the ECHO for a period of 3 years from the date the active duty sponsor dies. Any other eligible surviving dependent remains eligible for benefits under the ECHO for a period of three years from the date the active duty sponsor dies or until the surviving eligible dependent:

(A) Attains 21 years of age, or

(B) Attains 23 years of age or ceases to pursue a full-time course of study prior to attaining 23 years of age, if, at 21 years of age, the eligible surviving dependent is enrolled in a full-time course of study in a secondary school or in a full-time course of study in an institution of higher education approved by Secretary of Defense and was, at the time of the sponsor's death, in fact dependent on the member for over one-half of such dependent's support.

(iv) A spouse, child, or unmarried person (as defined in paragraphs Sec. 199.3(b)(2)(i), (b)(2)(ii), or (b)(2)(iv)) of a deceased member of the Uniformed Services who, at the time of the member's death was receiving benefits under ECHO, and the member at the time of death was eligible for receipt of hostile-

fire pay, or died as a result of a disease or injury incurred while eligible for such pay. In such a case, the surviving dependent remains eligible for benefits under ECHO through midnight of the dependent's twenty-first birthday.

(2) *Qualifying condition.* The following are qualifying conditions:

(i) *Mental retardation.* A diagnosis of moderate or severe mental retardation made in accordance with the criteria of the current edition of the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" published by the American Psychiatric Association.

(ii) *Serious physical disability.* A serious physical disability as defined in Sec. 199.2.

(iii) *Extraordinary physical or psychological condition.* An extraordinary physical or psychological condition as defined in Sec. 199.2.

(iv) *Infant/toddler.* Beneficiaries under the age of 3 years who are diagnosed with a neuromuscular developmental condition or other condition that is expected to precede a diagnosis of moderate or severe mental retardation or a serious physical disability, shall be deemed to have a qualifying condition for the ECHO. The Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee shall establish criteria for ECHO eligibility in lieu of the requirements of paragraphs (b)(2)(i), (ii) or (iii) of this section.

(v) *Multiple disabilities.* The cumulative effect of multiple disabilities, as determined by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee shall be used in lieu of the requirements of paragraphs (b)(2)(i), (ii) or (iii) of this section to determine a qualifying condition when the beneficiary has two or more disabilities involving separate body systems.

(3) *Loss of ECHO eligibility.* Eligibility for ECHO benefits ceases as of 12:01 a.m. of the day following the day that:

(i) The sponsor ceases to be an active duty member for any reason other than death; or

(ii) Eligibility based upon the abused dependent provisions of paragraph (b)(1)(ii) of this section expires; or

(iii) Eligibility based upon the deceased sponsor provisions of paragraphs (b)(1)(iii) or (iv) of this section expires; or

(iv) Eligibility based upon a beneficiary's participation in the Transitional Assistance Management Program ends; or

(v) The Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee determines that the beneficiary no longer has a qualifying condition.

(c) ECHO benefit. Items and services that the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee has determined are capable of confirming, arresting, or reducing the severity of the disabling effects of a qualifying condition, includes, but are not limited to:

(1) Diagnostic procedures to establish a qualifying condition or to measure the extent of functional loss resulting from a qualifying condition.

(2) Medical, habilitative, rehabilitative services and supplies, durable equipment and assistive technology (AT) devices that assist in the reduction of the disabling effects of a qualifying condition. Benefits shall be provided in the beneficiary's home or another environment, as appropriate. An AT device may be covered only if it is recommended in a beneficiary's Individual Educational Program (IEP) or, if the beneficiary is not eligible for an IEP, the AT device is an item or educational learning device normally included in an IEP and is preauthorized under ECHO as an integral component of the beneficiary's individual comprehensive health care services plan (including rehabilitation) as prescribed by a TRICARE authorized provider.

(i) An AT device may be covered under ECHO only if it is not otherwise covered by TRICARE as durable equipment, a prosthetic, augmentation communication device, or other benefits under Sec. 199.4.

(ii) An AT device may include an educational learning device directly related to the beneficiary's qualifying condition when recommended by an IEP and not otherwise provided by State or local government programs. If an individual is not eligible for an IEP, an educational learning device normally included in the IEP may be authorized as if directly related to the beneficiary's qualifying condition and prescribed by a TRICARE authorized provider as part of the beneficiary's individual comprehensive health care services plan.

(iii) Electronic learning devices may include the hardware and software as appropriate. The Director, DHA, shall determine the types and (or) platforms of electronic devices and the replacement lifecycle of the hardware and its supporting software. All upgrades or replacements shall require a recommendation from the individual's IEP or the individual's comprehensive health care services plan.

(iv) Duplicative or redundant hardware platforms are not authorized.

Note to paragraph (c)(2)(iv): When one or more electronic platforms such as a desktop computer, laptop, notebook or tablet can perform the same functions in relation to the teaching or educational objective directly related to the qualifying condition, it is the intent of this provision to allow only one electronic platform that may be chosen by the beneficiary. Duplicative or redundant platforms are not allowed; however, a second platform may be obtained, if the individual's IEP recommends one platform such as a computer for the majority of the learning objectives, but there exists another objective, which cannot be performed on that platform. In these limited circumstances, the beneficiary may submit a request with the above justification to the Director, TMA, who may authorize a second device.

(v) AT devices damaged through improper use of the device may not be replaced until the device would next be eligible for a lifecycle replacement.

(vi) AT devices do not include equipment or devices whose primary purpose is to assist the individual to engage in sports or recreational activities.

(3) Training that teaches the use of assistive technology devices or to acquire skills that are necessary for the management of the qualifying condition. Such training is also authorized for the beneficiary's immediate family. Vocational training, in the beneficiary's home or a facility providing such, is also allowed.

(4) Special education as provided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and defined at 34 CFR 300.26 and that is specifically designed to accommodate the disabling effects of the qualifying condition.

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(5) Institutional care within a state, as defined in Sec. 199.2, in private nonprofit, public, and state institutions and facilities, when the severity of the qualifying condition requires protective custody or training in a residential environment. For the purpose of this section protective custody means residential care that is necessary when the severity of the qualifying condition is such that the safety and well-being of the beneficiary or those who come into contact with the beneficiary may be in jeopardy without such care.

(6) Transportation of an ECHO beneficiary receiving benefits under paragraph (c)(5), and a medical attendant when necessary to assure the beneficiary's safety, to or from a facility or institution to receive authorized ECHO services or items.

(7) *Respite care.* ECHO beneficiaries are eligible for 16 hours of respite care per month in any month during which the beneficiary otherwise receives an ECHO benefit(s). Respite care is defined in Sec. 199.2. Respite care services will be provided by a TRICARE-authorized home health agency and will be designed to provide health care services for the covered beneficiary, and not baby-sitting or child-care services for other members of the family. The benefit will not be cumulative, that is, any respite care hours not used in one month will not be carried over or banked for use on another occasion.

(i) TRICARE-authorized home health agencies must provide and bill for all authorized ECHO respite care services through established TRICARE claims' mechanisms. No special billing arrangements will be authorized in conjunction with coverage that may be provided by Medicaid or other federal, state, community or private programs.

(ii) For authorized ECHO respite care, TRICARE will reimburse the allowable charges or negotiated rates.

(iii) **The Government's cost-share incurred for these services accrues to the program year benefit limit of \$36,000.**

(8) *Other services.* (i) *Assistive services.* Services of qualified personal assistants, such as an interpreter or translator for ECHO beneficiaries who are deaf or mute and readers for ECHO beneficiaries who are blind, when such services are necessary in order for the ECHO beneficiary to receive authorized ECHO benefits.

(ii) *Equipment adaptation.* The allowable equipment and an AT device purchase shall include such services and modifications to the equipment as necessary to make the equipment usable for a particular ECHO beneficiary.

(iii) *Equipment maintenance.* Reasonable repairs and maintenance of the beneficiary owned or rented DE or AT devices provided by this section shall be allowed while a beneficiary is registered in the ECHO Program. Repairs of DE and/or AT devices damaged while using the item in a manner inconsistent with its common use, and replacement of lost or stolen rental DE are not authorized coverage as an ECHO benefit. In addition, repairs and maintenance of deluxe, luxury, or immaterial features of DE or AT devices are not authorized coverage as an ECHO benefit.

(d) ECHO Exclusions--(1) *Basic Program.* Benefits allowed under the TRICARE Basic Program will not be provided through the ECHO.

(2) *Inpatient care.* Inpatient acute care for medical or surgical treatment of an acute illness, or of an acute exacerbation of the qualifying condition, is excluded.

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- (3) *Structural alterations.* Alterations to living space and permanent fixtures attached thereto, including alterations necessary to accommodate installation of equipment or AT devices to facilitate entrance or exit, are excluded.
- (4) *Homemaker services.* Services that predominantly provide assistance with household chores are excluded.
- (5) *Dental care or orthodontic treatment.* Both are excluded.
- (6) *Deluxe travel or accommodations.* The difference between the price for travel or accommodations that provide services or features that exceed the requirements of the beneficiary's condition and the price for travel or accommodations without those services or features is excluded.
- (7) *Equipment.* Purchase or rental of DE and AT devices otherwise allowed by this section is excluded when:
- (i) The beneficiary is a patient in an institution or facility that ordinarily provides the same type of equipment or AT devices to its patients at no additional charge in the usual course of providing services; or
 - (ii) The item is available to the beneficiary from a Uniformed Services Medical Treatment Facility; or
 - (iii) The item has deluxe, luxury, immaterial or nonessential features that increase the cost to the Department relative to a similar item without those features; or
 - (iv) The item is a duplicate DE or an AT device, as defined in Sec. 199.2.
 - (v) The item (or charge for access to such items through health club membership or other activities) is exercise equipment including an item primarily and customarily designed for use in sports or recreational activities, spa, whirlpool, hot tub, swimming pool, an electronic device used to locate or monitor the location of the beneficiary, or other similar items or charges.
- (8) *Maintenance agreements.* Maintenance agreements for beneficiary owned or rented equipment or AT device are excluded.
- (9) *No obligation to pay.* Services or items for which the beneficiary or sponsor has no legal obligation to pay are excluded.
- (10) *Public facility or Federal government.* Services or items paid for, or eligible for payment, directly or indirectly by a public facility, as defined in Sec. 199.2, or by the Federal government, other than the Department of Defense, are excluded for training, rehabilitation, special education, assistive technology devices, institutional care in private nonprofit, public, and state institutions and facilities, and if appropriate, transportation to and from such institutions and facilities, except when such services or items are eligible for payment under a state plan for medical assistance under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid). Rehabilitation and assistive technology services or supplies may be available under the TRICARE Basic Program.
- (11) *Study, grant, or research programs.* Services and items provided as a part of a scientific clinical study, grant, or research program are excluded.

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(12) *Unproven status.* Drugs, devices, medical treatments, diagnostic, and therapeutic procedures for which the safety and efficacy have not been established in accordance with Sec. 199.4 are excluded.

(13) *Immediate family or household.* Services or items provided or prescribed by a member of the beneficiary's immediate family, or a person living in the beneficiary's or sponsor's household, are excluded.

(14) *Court or agency ordered care.* Services or items ordered by a court or other government agency, which are not otherwise an allowable ECHO benefit, are excluded.

(15) *Excursions.* Excursions are excluded regardless of whether or not they are part of a program offered by a TRICARE-authorized provider. The transportation benefit available under ECHO is specified elsewhere in this section.

(16) *Drugs and medicines.* Drugs and medicines that do not meet the requirements of Sec. 199.4 or Sec. 199.21 are excluded.

(17) *Therapeutic absences.* Therapeutic absences from an inpatient facility or from home for a homebound beneficiary are excluded.

(18) *Custodial care.* Custodial care, as defined in Sec. 199.2, is not a stand-alone benefit. Services generally rendered as custodial care may be provided only as specifically set out in this section.

(19) *Domiciliary care.* Domiciliary care, as defined in Sec. 199.2, is excluded.

(20) *Respite care.* Respite care for the purpose of covering primary caregiver (as defined in Sec. 199.2) absences due to deployment, employment, seeking of employment or to pursue education is excluded. Authorized respite care covers only the ECHO beneficiary, not siblings or others who may reside in or be visiting in the beneficiary's residence.

(e) ECHO Home Health Care (EHC). The EHC benefit provides coverage of home health care services and respite care services specified in this section.

(1) *Home health care.* Covered ECHO home health care services are the same as, and provided under the same conditions as those services described in Sec. 199.4(e)(21)(i), except that they are not limited to part-time or intermittent services. Custodial care services, as defined in Sec. 199.2, may be provided to the extent such services are provided in conjunction with authorized ECHO home health care services, including the EHC respite care benefit specified in this section. Beneficiaries who are authorized EHC will receive all home health care services under EHC and no portion will be provided under the Basic Program. TRICARE-authorized home health agencies are not required to use the Outcome and Assessment Information Set (OASIS) to assess beneficiaries who are authorized EHC.

(2) *Respite care.* EHC beneficiaries whose plan of care includes frequent interventions by the primary caregiver(s) are eligible for respite care services in lieu of the ECHO general respite care benefit. For the purpose of this section, the term "frequent" means "more than two interventions during the eight-hour period per day that the primary caregiver would normally be sleeping." The services performed by the primary caregiver are those that can be performed safely and effectively by the average non-medical person without direct supervision of a health care provider after the primary caregiver has been trained by appropriate medical personnel. EHC beneficiaries in this situation are eligible for a maximum of eight hours per day, 5 days per week, of respite care by a TRICARE-authorized

home health agency. The home health agency will provide the health care interventions or services for the covered beneficiary so that the primary caregiver is relieved of the responsibility to provide such interventions or services for the duration of that period of respite care. The home health agency will not provide baby-sitting or child care services for other members of the family. The benefit is not cumulative, that is, any respite care hours not used in a given day may not be carried over or banked for use on another occasion. Additionally, the eight-hour respite care periods will not be provided consecutively, that is, a respite care period on one calendar day will not be immediately followed by a respite care period the next calendar day. The Government's cost-share incurred for these services accrue to the maximum yearly ECHO Home Health Care benefit.

(3) *EHHC eligibility.* The EHHC is authorized for beneficiaries who meet all applicable ECHO eligibility requirements and who:

(i) Physically reside within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, or Guam; and

(ii) Are homebound, as defined in Sec. 199.2; and

(iii) Require medically necessary skilled services that exceed the level of coverage provided under the Basic Program's home health care benefit; and/or

(iv) Require frequent interventions by the primary caregiver(s) such that respite care services are necessary to allow primary caregiver(s) the opportunity to rest; and

(v) Are case managed to include a reassessment at least every 90 days, and receive services as outlined in a written plan of care; and

(vi) Receive all home health care services from a TRICARE-authorized home health agency, as described in Sec. 199.6(b)(4)(xv), in the beneficiary's primary residence.

(4) *EHHC plan of care.* A written plan of care is required prior to authorizing ECHO home health care. The plan must include the type, frequency, scope and duration of the care to be provided and support the professional level of provider. Reimbursement will not be authorized for a level of provider not identified in the plan of care.

(5) *EHHC exclusions--(i) General.* ECHO Home Health Care services and supplies are excluded from those who are being provided continuing coverage of home health care as participants of the former Individual Case Management Program for Persons with Extraordinary Conditions (ICMP-PEC) or previous case management demonstrations.

(ii) *Respite care.* Respite care for the purpose of covering primary caregiver absences due to deployment, employment, seeking of employment or to pursue education is excluded. Authorized respite care covers only the ECHO beneficiary, not siblings or others who may reside in or be visiting in the beneficiary's residence.

(f) Cost-share liability--(1) No deductible. ECHO benefits are not subject to a deductible amount.

(2) *Sponsor cost-share liability.* (i) Regardless of the number of family members receiving ECHO benefits or ECHO Home Health Care in a given month, the sponsor's cost-share is according to the following table:

TABLE 1 -- MONTHLY COST-SHARE BY MEMBER'S PAY GRADE	
E-1 through E-5.....	\$25
E-6.....	30
E-7 and O-1.....	35
E-8 and O-2.....	40
E-9, W-1, W-2 and O-3.....	45
W-3, W-4 and O-4.....	50
W-5 and O-5.....	65
O-6.....	75
O-7.....	100
O-8.....	150
O-9.....	200
O-10.....	250

(ii) The sponsor's cost-share shown in Table 1 in paragraph (f)(2)(i) of this section will be applied to the first allowed ECHO charges in any given month. The Government's share will be paid, up to the maximum amount specified in paragraph (f)(3) of this section, for allowed charges after the sponsor's cost-share has been applied.

(iii) The provisions of Sec. 199.18(d)(1) and (e)(1) regarding elimination of copayments for active duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime do not eliminate, reduce, or otherwise affect the sponsor's cost-share shown in Table 1 in paragraph (f)(2)(i) of this section.

(iv) The sponsor's cost-share shown in Table 1 in paragraph (f)(2)(i) of this section does not accrue to the Basic Program's Catastrophic Loss Protection under 10 U.S.C. 1079(b)(5) as shown at Sec. 199.4(f)(10) and 199.18(f).

(3) **Government cost-share liability--(i) ECHO.** The total Government share of the cost of all ECHO benefits, except ECHO Home Health Care (EHC) and EHC respite care, provided in a given program year to a beneficiary, may not exceed \$36,000 after application of the allowable payment methodology.

(ii) **ECHO home health care.** (A) The maximum annual program year Government cost-share per EHC-eligible beneficiary for ECHO home health care, including EHC respite care may not exceed the local wage-adjusted highest Medicare Resource Utilization Group (RUG-III) category cost for care in a TRICARE-authorized skilled nursing facility.

(B) When a beneficiary moves to a different locality within the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, or Guam, the annual program year cap will be recalculated to reflect the maximum established under paragraph (f)(3)(ii)(A) of this section for the beneficiary's new location and will apply to the EHC benefit for the remaining portion of that program year.

(g) **Benefit payment--(1) Transportation.** The allowable amount for transportation of an ECHO beneficiary is limited to the actual cost of the standard published fare plus any standard surcharge made to accommodate any person with a similar disability or to the actual cost of specialized medical transportation when non-specialized transport cannot accommodate the beneficiary's qualifying

condition related needs, or when specialized transport is more economical than non-specialized transport. When transport is by private vehicle, the allowable amount is limited to the Federal government employee mileage reimbursement rate in effect on the date the transportation is provided.

(2) *Equipment.* (i) The TRICARE allowable amount for DE or AT devices shall be calculated in the same manner as DME allowable through section 199.4 of this title, and accrues to the program year benefit limit specified in paragraph (f)(3) of this section.

(ii) *Cost-share.* A cost-share, as provided by paragraph (f)(2) of this section, is required for each month in which equipment or an AT device is purchased under this section. However, in no month shall a sponsor be required to pay more than one cost-share regardless of the number of benefits the sponsor's dependents received under this section.

(3) *For-profit institutional care provider.* Institutional care provided by a for-profit entry may be allowed only when the care for a specific ECHO beneficiary:

(i) Is contracted for by a public facility as a part of a publicly funded long-term inpatient care program; and

(ii) Is provided based upon the ECHO beneficiary's being eligible for the publicly funded program which has contracted for the care; and

(iii) Is authorized by the public facility as a part of a publicly funded program; and

(iv) Would cause a cost-share liability in the absence of TRICARE eligibility; and

(v) Produces an ECHO beneficiary cost-share liability that does not exceed the maximum charge by the provider to the public facility for the contracted level of care.

(4) *ECHO home health care and EHC respite care.* (i) TRICARE-authorized home health agencies must provide and bill for all authorized home health care services through established TRICARE claims' mechanisms. No special billing arrangements will be authorized in conjunction with coverage that may be provided by Medicaid or other federal, state, community or private programs.

(ii) For authorized ECHO home health care and respite care, TRICARE will reimburse the allowable charges or negotiated rates.

(iii) The maximum monthly Government reimbursement for EHC, including EHC respite care, will be based on the actual number of hours of EHC services rendered in the month, but in no case will it exceed one-twelfth of the annual maximum Government cost-share as determined in this section and adjusted according to the actual number of days in the month the services were provided.

(h) Other Requirements--(1) Applicable part. All provisions of this part, except the provisions of Sec. 199.4 unless otherwise provided by this section or as directed by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee, apply to the ECHO.

(2) *Registration.* Active duty sponsors must register potential ECHO-eligible beneficiaries through the Director, TRICARE Management Activity, or designee prior to receiving ECHO benefits. The Director, TRICARE Management Activity, or designee will determine ECHO eligibility and update the Defense

Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System accordingly. Unless waived by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee, sponsors must provide evidence of enrollment in the Exceptional Family Member Program provided by their branch of Service at the time they register their family member(s) for the ECHO.

(3) *Benefit authorization.* All ECHO benefits require authorization by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee prior to receipt of such benefits.

(i) *Documentation.* The sponsor shall provide such documentation as the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee requires as a prerequisite to authorizing ECHO benefits. Such documentation shall describe how the requested benefit will contribute to confirming, arresting, or reducing the disabling effects of the qualifying condition, including maintenance of function or prevention of further deterioration of function, of the beneficiary.

(ii) *Format.* An authorization issued by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee shall specify such description, dates, amounts, requirements, limitations or information as necessary for exact identification of approved benefits and efficient adjudication of resulting claims.

(iii) *Valid period.* An authorization for ECHO benefits shall be valid until such time as the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee determines that the authorized services are no longer appropriate or required or the beneficiary is no longer eligible under paragraph (b) of this section.

(iv) *Authorization waiver.* The Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee may waive the requirement for a written authorization for rendered ECHO benefits that, except for the absence of the written authorization, would be allowable as an ECHO benefit.

(v) *Public facility use.* (A) An ECHO beneficiary residing within a state must demonstrate that a public facility is not available and adequate to meet the needs of their qualifying condition. Such requirements shall apply to beneficiaries who request authorization for training, rehabilitation, special education, assistive technology, and institutional care in private nonprofit, public, and state institutions and facilities, and if appropriate for beneficiaries receiving institutional care, transportation to and from such institutions and facilities. The maximum Government cost-share for services that require demonstration of public facility non-availability or inadequacy is limited to \$36,000 per program year per beneficiary. State-administered plans for medical assistance under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (Medicaid) are not considered available and adequate facilities for the purpose of this section.

(B) The domicile of the beneficiary shall be the basis for the determination of public facility availability when the sponsor and beneficiary are separately domiciled due to the sponsor's move to a new permanent duty station or due to legal custody requirements.

(C) Written certification, in accordance with information requirements, formats, and procedures established by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee that requested ECHO services or items cannot be obtained from public facilities because the services or items are not available and adequate, is a prerequisite for ECHO benefit payment for training, rehabilitation, special education, assistive technology, and institutional care in private nonprofit, public, and state institutions and facilities, and if appropriate, transportation to and from such institutions and facilities.

(1) An administrator or designee of a public facility may make such certification for a beneficiary residing within the service area of that public facility.

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(2) The Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee may determine, on a case-by-case basis, that apparent public facility availability or adequacy for a requested type of service or item cannot be substantiated for a specific beneficiary's request for ECHO benefits and therefore is not available.

(i) A case-specific determination shall be based upon a written statement by the beneficiary (or sponsor or guardian acting on behalf of the beneficiary) which details the circumstances wherein a specific individual representing a specific public facility refused to provide a public facility use certification, and such other information as the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee determines to be material to the determination.

(ii) A case-specific determination of public facility availability by the Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee is conclusive and is not appealable under Sec. 199.10.

(4) Repair or maintenance of DE owned by the beneficiary or an AT device is exempt from the public facility-use certification requirements.

(5) The requirements of this paragraph (h)(3)(v)(A) notwithstanding, no public facility use certification is required for services and items that are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in accordance with the Individualized Family Services Plan and that are otherwise allowable under the ECHO.

(i) Implementing instructions. The Director, TRICARE Management Activity or designee shall issue TRICARE policies, instructions, procedures, guidelines, standards, and criteria as may be necessary to implement the intent of this section.

(j) Effective date. All changes to this section are effective as of October 14, 2008, and claims for ECHO benefits provided on or after that date will be reprocessed retroactively to that date as necessary.

[62 FR 35093, Jun 30, 1997, as amended at 62 FR 42904, Aug 11, 1997; 66 FR 9655, Feb 9, 2001; 67 FR 18827, Apr 17, 2002; 69 FR 44947, Jul 28, 2004; 69 FR 51564, Aug 20, 2004; 71 FR 47092, Aug 16, 2006; 72 FR 2447, Jan 19, 2007; 73 FR 30478, May 28, 2008; 75 FR 47711, Aug 9, 2010; 79 FR 78713, Dec 31, 2014; 81 FR 27329, May 6, 2016; **82 FR 45447, Sep 29, 2017**]

