




## Why the Right to Repair is NOT the Right Thing *TO DO* to Address Delays in Wheelchair Repairs

Delays in wheelchair repairs have led many patient advocate groups to latch on to the Right to Repair movement as the answer. There are 5 main reasons contributing to these delays and some can be addressed immediately. However, the proposed Right to Repair Bills in their current form will not address these issues and could lead to serious consequences for patients attempting to repair their own wheelchair with bodily harm and/or property damage. Wheelchairs are regulated by the FDA and must “do no harm” to the users as these items are sophisticated pieces of equipment that requires numerous safety tests before they are able to be sold in the U.S. Therefore, if they are not repaired by a **trained technician** it could lead to malfunction, accident, fire, etc. Let’s look at the issues with timely wheelchair repairs and work towards addressing these.

- **Prior Authorization** – Some insurances require a **Prior Authorization** for repairs (Medicare FFS does NOT) which takes days to weeks for approval, therefore, the supplier can’t repair the wheelchair until they receive a prior authorization – **TO DO:** Request the health insurance to either eliminate or expedite prior authorization for repairs (to days not weeks).
- **Continued Medical Need** - Most insurances require what is known as **Continued Need** which is required 12 months preceding the date of the repair and must be documented in the patient’s chart (progress note). The supplier can’t repair the wheelchair until they have continued need and this could result in a delay in the repair. An **order/prescription is NOT sufficient for continued need!** – **TO DO:** Request the health insurance to **NOT require continued need for patients with a group 3 condition (neurological, myopathy or congenital skeletal deformity) AND / OR allow an order to suffice** as continued need.
- **Reimbursement Rates** – The rates (allowables) have been reduced over the past several years due to the Medicare Competitive Bidding Program which has negatively impacted the reimbursement for repairs (**most wheelchair suppliers lose money on repairs**) – **TO DO:** Advocate to congressional representatives and to Medicare and those that follow Medicare pricing to roll back the reimbursement rate cuts of 40% from 2016 which will enable wheelchair suppliers the ability to repair wheelchairs timely and accurately.
- **Selecting the right Wheelchair Supplier** - Some suppliers allocate their resources in providing new wheelchairs rather than to repair the wheelchairs they provide – **TO DO:** If a wheelchair was received from a supplier that won’t repair the wheelchair timely **SELECT a LOCAL small to mid-sized wheelchair supplier** as they tend to dedicate resources for all around patient care (new product **AND** repairs) compared to just focusing on new sales. Think of it as Wal Mart



(large national chain) compared to the local neighborhood store where you may sacrifice service for savings by going to Wal Mart **BUT** for wheelchairs when health insurance is involved the **reimbursement rate is the SAME** regardless of who is selected, **so there is NO savings to the patient by using a supplier that doesn't dedicate resources to repair what they sell**, only poor service.

- **COVID Pandemic Supply Chain Issues** - Recently there are supply chain issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic – **TO DO:** This IS an issue that is contributing to delays in repairs and is a challenge for any supplier right now and the Right to Repair would NOT resolve this issue. But this is a recent occurrence over the past year or so and was NOT a contributing factor prior to 2021. **Select a wheelchair supplier that has a loaner wheelchair while waiting for parts.** Medicare and those that follow Medicare pay for a **one-month rental during a repair** and the patient can privately pay for additional months if the repair can't be done within a month due to a delay in getting the part(s).