



"Treatment with the help of the horse"

## AMERICAN HIPPO THERAPY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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### AHA, Inc.'s Position on Coding and Billing

#### American Hippotherapy Association, Inc. Position on Statement of Billing for Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Speech Therapy Services Incorporating Hippotherapy

The mission of the American Hippotherapy Association, Inc. is to promote excellence in equine-assisted therapy. The term *hippotherapy* refers to how physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology professionals use evidence-based practice and clinical reasoning in the purposeful manipulation of equine movement to engage the sensory, neuromotor, and cognitive systems to achieve functional outcomes. In conjunction with the affordances of the equine environment and other treatment strategies, hippotherapy is part of a patient's integrated plan of care.

S8940 was created on April 1, 2005. The code description is as follows: "Equestrian/hippotherapy, per session."

It is the position of AHA, Inc. that in accordance with American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) guidelines there exist current procedural terminology (CPT) codes which accurately describe the physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language pathology procedures provided during equine assisted therapy. It is the therapist's responsibility to utilize the specific code best describing the treatment provided. Codes frequently used to describe treatments provided for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology services incorporating equine movement include the following, based on procedures used to achieve intended outcomes:

#### **Physical Therapy Services:**

- 97110-therapeutic exercise
- 97112-neuromuscular reeducation
- 97116-gait training
- 97530-therapeutic activities

#### **Occupational Therapy Services:**

- 97110-therapeutic exercise
- 97112-neuromuscular reeducation
- 97530-therapeutic activities
- 97533-Sensory Integration

#### **Speech Therapy Services:**

- 92507- speech/language-individual
- 92508- speech/language-group
- 97532-cognitive skills development
- 97533-sensory integration

This position was developed based on the following:

The American Medical Association (AMA) coding procedures mandate that therapy professionals use the CPT codes that most accurately describe the clinical process being utilized and the intended outcome. The national associations (APTA, AOTA, and ASHA) direct treating therapy professionals to use AMA coding procedures. The existing CPT and Health Care Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) Level I physical medicine codes provide the most ethical and legal description of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology treatment services when equine movement is incorporated with other clinical processes.

- Level II alpha numeric codes such as S-codes are temporary national codes and are mainly used by the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association and the Health Insurance Association of America to report drugs, services, and supplies where no other codes are available. According to this definition, it is inappropriate to use the code S8940, because current level I HCPCS codes exist to describe the treatment interventions physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech language pathology professionals provide based on evidence-based practice and clinical assessment.
- Hippotherapy is not a separate therapy. It can only be provided by physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology professionals during physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech-language pathology treatment sessions. It is used in conjunction with many physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy treatment strategies as part of a patient's treatment plan and total plan of care (e.g., neuro-developmental treatment, Proprioceptive Neuromotor Facilitation (PNF), sensory integration, and range of motion). As such, it is not possible to bill for hippotherapy as a separate procedure. During physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech therapy treatment, there is no time that physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech therapy ends and hippotherapy begins. The use of HCPCS code S8940 does not accurately reflect physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech-language pathology procedures provided in conjunction with equine movement.
- Physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology treatment incorporating hippotherapy is not new or experimental. There is a growing body of scientific research supporting the use of equine movement and other therapeutic interventions during a physical therapy, occupational therapy, or speech-language pathology treatment session. Vestibular stimulation and rhythm is the cornerstone of many other well-documented therapeutic interventions utilized by these therapy professionals. A listing of research pertaining to equine movement/hippotherapy can be viewed at [www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org](http://www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org).