Rifton Pacer Gait Trainers

A Sample Letter of Medical Necessity: School-based Therapy with Adolescents

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Components of a letter of Medical Necessity

Describe who you are, what you want, and beneficiary's name:

As John Doe's therapist, I am requesting funding authorization for a Rifton Pacer gait trainer.

Establish your credentials, experience in the field and relationship to beneficiary:

I have worked in the school system as a physical therapist since I graduated in ____, providing services including recommendation and fitting of adaptive equipment for children and young adults with disabilities. Five years ago I became certified as an APTA Pediatric Specialist. Since I am also a certified Assistive Technology Professional (ATP), I provide staff seminars on utilizing assistive technology in the school setting. I have been John's physical therapist for the last two years seeing him on a bi-weekly basis.

Explain the beneficiary's condition, including diagnosis, or nature of injury:

John Doe has a diagnosis of quadriplegic cerebral palsy. His quadriplegia is accompanied by spasticity of the upper and lower extremities with poor controlled movements and muscular weakness in the trunk, arms, and legs. [Describe ability to sit, stand, and walk including amount of assistance needed for each activity.]

Discuss the impact on the beneficiary's and caregiver's life. Note both the limitations and abilities without the requested equipment:

Because of his diagnosis and impairments, John spends most of his day in a wheelchair. And without adequate support and positioning he is unable to assume an upright position to learn mobility skills.

With continued dependence on his wheelchair, John is progressively losing what little functional abilities he does have. Currently he has the capacity to bear 25% of his own weight but has no support for continued practice of this skill or any ambulation skills.

To date we have not been successful in our attempts to enable John Doe to be up and moving to his greatest functional potential. This has impacted him both therapeutically and medically. Prolonged positioning in a wheelchair has resulted in flexion contractures at hips and knees requiring corrective surgeries and increased therapy interventions and he is now at risk for pressure ulcers and osteoporosis. As John Doe grows larger and heavier his transfers are becoming more difficult, increasing the risk of back injuries for his caregivers. These are costly and cyclical problems that can be improved by providing the proper equipment that supports being upright and gives opportunities for independent mobility and transfer practice. Research tells us that even the most significantly involved person, given enough repetitions, can learn new skills, but there must be many opportunities to practice movements.

State the type of equipment and accessories being requested:

For this reason, I am requesting a Rifton Pacer Gait Trainer for John with a dynamic upper frame, a standard base, a multi-position saddle, arm platforms, and odometer.

Describe equipment, adjustments for growth, and psychological benefits:

The Rifton Pacer will support even the most significantly involved child in an upright position while allowing for lower extremity movement that is comfortable and therapeutic in many ways. This includes weight-bearing, ambulation and transfer skills practice. Being upright and mobile also improves respiration, digestion, circulation, bowel/bladder function, and provides the opportunity for gravity-assisted stretching, self-initiated joint ROM,

and bone development. When children are at eye level with their peers, their social, emotional, and psychological development is enhanced—all necessary for the growth of a well-rounded and healthy child. Inclusion with peers is a profound motivator for movement. Because of the prompt system of supports on the Pacer, John Doe will have many opportunities to practice walking skills and be out of his wheelchair. As John Doe progresses, supports can be lowered or taken away, further improving overall muscle strength and control. The Pacer is also adjustable for growth and is modular in design, allowing for easy transport.

Describe why the device is medically necessary. Show how the requested equipment will result in an increase of function and other physical benefits:

The Pacer is medically necessary for John because it will provide opportunities for John to participate in his transfers and practice standing and gait. These are important functional skills for John to work on and maintain especially as he continues to grow.

With a trial of gait training equipment options, John has shown the capability to take steps with the support of the dynamic upper frame and the multi-position saddle. Alternative static frame support, and alternative weight-bearing and pelvic positioning options proved inadequate in providing John with the support needed to both stabilize and allow movement of his pelvic girdle and trunk to successfully achieve step-taking.

The dynamic upper frame allows for optional vertical up and down movement to provide dynamic weight-bearing, enabling John to move his center of gravity vertically as in typical biomechanics of gait. This vertical assist facilitates the stance limb to move more easily into the toe-off phase of gait, while the opposite limb can swing forward more freely. Additionally, the dynamic upper frame allows for optional side-to-side movement to facilitate weight-shifting as in natural gait patterns. This is medically necessary as it will substantially improve success with step-taking.

The multi-position saddle can be adjusted in height, depth and angle, for customized pelvic positioning. This saddle provides full pelvic and weight-bearing support to the user with the option of progressively reducing the supports as the user improves postural control when working towards independent gait. In addition, the multi-position saddle is designed so that it can be used to aid transfer from sitting to standing. This makes transfers easier for the caregiver and gait training opportunities more likely to happen.

In his wheelchair, John depends on the arm rests to help stabilize his trunk and head and keep his body in alignment. He will therefore require the arm platforms on the Pacer for the same reason during gait practice. The arm platforms will also help control the spastic movements of his upper extremities allowing him to fully concentrate on participating in his mobility tasks.

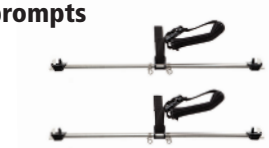
Since the spasticity in John's upper and lower extremities cause his gait to be jerky and not well controlled, he will need the unique casters available on the Pacer base which are designed to allow for easier steering and control of the device during ambulation: the swivel lock guides movement keeping the Pacer in a straight line course, avoiding collisions with the walls of the hall or with other pedestrians. Adjustable resistance slows movement when necessary such as when going down a ramp. And the forward-only lock prevents inadvertent backwards movement, which is also needed in John's case due to his spastic muscle tone and difficulty with motor control.

Since John is receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act he needs a reliable measurement to show that his goals on the IEP are being met. The odometer on the Pacer can be quickly re-set to show how much distance John is able to ambulate in a gait training session. This will give his caregivers a concrete way to show progress in his interventions for improved step-taking and walking endurance.

Itemization of the Pacer Gait Trainer:

Item	Description of Medical Necessity
Dynamic upper frame 	Allows for optional vertical up/down movement to provide dynamic weight-bearing; allows for optional side-to-side movement to provide dynamic weight-shift. Enabling dynamic movement of the frame creates a floating movement of the entire upper frame and prompt system, substantially improving success with step-taking by allowing more natural patterning in gait. Height adjustable.
Standard upper frame 	A static upper frame to which the prompt accessories attach, required as a basic component of the item. Height adjustable.
Standard base 	The basic base frame with four 5.5" casters with features that include swivel-lock, forward-only lock, drag, and brake options. These features serve as gait training settings that substantially improve gait control for the more involved client.
Utility base 	A base frame with 8" front casters and 11.5" rear wheels, designed to accommodate surfaces such as grass, gravel, or wood chips, enabling increased participation in home, school, and community environments. Caster/wheel features include swivel-lock, forward-only lock, drag, and brake options.
Treadmill/stability base 	A base frame for treadmill and overland use; utilizing the Pacer over the treadmill provides opportunity for increased intensity gait training and step taking practice in an indoor environment. Caster features for overland ambulation include swivel-lock, forward-only lock, drag, and brake options.
Arm prompts 	Allow for shoulder/arm positioning to assist weight-bearing, enables forward-lean during gait, improves strength/endurance of shoulder girdle to assist head control.
Arm platforms 	Allow for shoulder/arm positioning to assist weight-bearing, enables forward-lean during gait, improves strength/endurance of shoulder girdle to assist head control.
Hand loops 	Secure, highly adjustable, positioned to provide stability and confidence while moving.
Handholds 	Adjust for comfort of hand positioning to allow for weight-bearing assist and/or maneuvering with use of upper extremities.

Itemization of the Pacer Gait Trainer continued:

Item	Description of Medical Necessity
Chest prompt 	Offers safety and support for individuals with poor trunk control.
Communication tray 	Allows for positioning of learning tools and communication systems that enhance learning, provide motivation to remain upright, and communicate basic needs.
Multi-Position Saddle (MPS) 	Allows for customized pelvic positioning. Can be adjusted in height, and forward and back, as well as into an anterior or posterior angle, with circumferential stabilization as needed. Enables optimal pelvic positioning to improve gait capability.
Hip positioner (includes handholds) 	Safety and support while allowing for movement during walking.
Pelvic support (includes handholds) 	Safety and support with minimal abduction while allowing freedom of movement during walking.
Thigh prompts 	Combines thigh and knee abduction and adduction with comfortable free-swinging motion. Helps maintain good body alignment.
Ankle prompts 	Prevents legs from crossing and controls stride length. Necessary for good body alignment.
Odometer caster 	Measures the distance ambulated in a gait training session; shows progress in step-taking and walking endurance.
Attendant guide bar 	Enables caregiver to assist forward movement of Pacer, from in front or behind. Guide bar attaches with quick-release clamp to the front tube of the standard or utility base. Required to guide Pacer movement during initial gait training.

Describe other equipment previously trialed and why it didn't work:

We have trialed alternatives but determined these could not adequately meet John's needs. The previously utilized gait training equipment worked well for a time until he outgrew it and the transfers into this piece of equipment became too dangerous. The two caregivers performing the transfers could not safely hold John in an upright position long enough for him to be secured in the device, putting John at risk for falls and increasing the caregivers' risk for injury. In the Pacer, however, John can be safely transferred and can safely ambulate for longer distances, increasing his walking endurance while improving caregiver safety.

Make the person real, including goals:

John's goals for this semester are: To bear 30% of his weight during transfers and initiate steps for ambulation. He cannot achieve these goals while dependent on a wheelchair. His functional mobility and participation become very important to him especially as he looks towards the future when he will no longer be eligible for school therapy services and depend on maintaining his skills in a group home or day habilitation center.

The motivation to walk is very strong within the human spirit. Trying to build muscle strength with mat table or chair exercises has not been very successful in the past as it is difficult to be motivated to progress in these positions. Given a Rifton Pacer, John Doe will have the opportunities he needs to be upright, out of his wheelchair, and to practice walking skills.

Summarize cost benefits:

The Rifton Pacer gait trainer will save on costly medical and surgical interventions that become inevitable as muscles contract when one is confined to a wheelchair. Upright movement promotes health and decreases the costs of hospitalizations for high needs clients. Most importantly, the Pacer will allow John Doe to work toward becoming more independent rather than being totally dependent on caregivers for the rest of his life.

Additionally, the Pacer also has the potential of saving future medical costs of caregivers by injuring their backs with lifting and during transfers.

Considering the above, the Pacer will not only meet the needs of John Doe, his family, and caregiver, but also be most cost effective to the insurer.

Concluding paragraph restating the main points of the report:

Therefore, it is my opinion, according to the evaluation and trialing of equipment for John, that the most effective and least costly option would be the Rifton Pacer gait trainer for safe and effective practice of ambulation, as well as ease of transfer into the device.

Include pictures of the Rifton Pacer Gait Trainer.

Rifton Pacer Gait Trainer

Large standard Pacer K640

Large Pacer with utility base and dynamic upper K640

Large Pacer with dynamic upper and treadmill/stability base K640

Medium, Large and XL Pacers available in red, blue, gray, lime and pink.

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