

Standard Exome Sequencing

- I. Standard [exome sequencing](#), with [trio testing](#) when possible, is considered **medically necessary** when:
 - A. The member has not previously had [genome sequencing](#), **AND**
 - B. Alternate etiologies have been considered and ruled out when possible (e.g., environmental exposure, injury, infection, isolated prematurity), **AND**
 - C. Clinical presentation does not fit a well-described syndrome for which single-gene or targeted multigene panel testing is available, **AND**
 - D. The member's personal and family histories have been evaluated by a Medical Geneticist, Genetic Counselor or an Advanced Practice Nurse in Genetics (APGN), **AND**
 - E. The member meets at least one of the following clinical findings:
 1. The member has unexplained epilepsy diagnosed at any age, **OR**
 2. The member has [global developmental delay](#) or [intellectual disability](#) with onset prior to age 18 years, **OR**
 3. The member was diagnosed with at least one [congenital anomaly](#) (functional and/or structural), **OR**
 4. The member has at least **TWO** of the following:
 - a) Bilateral sensorineural hearing loss of unknown etiology, **OR**
 - b) Symptoms of a complex neurological disorder (e.g., dystonia, hemiplegia, spasticity, epilepsy, myopathy, muscular dystrophy), **OR**
 - c) Family history suggestive of a genetic etiology, including consanguinity, **OR**
 - d) Clinical or laboratory findings suggestive of an inborn error of metabolism, **OR**
 - e) Autism, **OR**

- f) Severe neuropsychiatric condition (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, Tourette syndrome, self-injurious behavior, reverse sleep-wake cycles), **OR**
 - g) Period of unexplained developmental regression (unrelated to epilepsy or autism).
- II. Repeat standard [exome sequencing](#) is considered **investigational**.
- III. Standard [exome sequencing](#) is considered **investigational** for all other indications, including screening asymptomatic/healthy individuals for genetic disorders.

RATIONALE AND REFERENCES

Standard Exome Sequencing

American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG)

In 2021, ACMG published an evidence-based clinical practice guideline on exome and genome sequencing for pediatric patients with congenital anomalies or intellectual disability, which included the following statements:

- “We strongly recommend ES and GS as a first- or second-tier test... for patients with one or more congenital anomalies prior to one year of age, or for patients with intellectual disability/developmental delay with onset prior to 18 years of age” (p. 2031)
- “Isolated autism without ID or congenital malformation is formally out of scope for this recommendation but evaluation of exome/genome studies is ongoing” (p. 2034)

Manickam K, McClain MR, Demmer LA, et al. Exome and genome sequencing for pediatric patients with congenital anomalies or intellectual disability: an evidence-based clinical guideline of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG). *Genet Med.* 2021;23(11):2029-2037. doi:10.1038/s41436-021-01242-6

In 2022, ACMG released a clinical practice resource for the clinical evaluation of hearing loss, which states that first-line genetic testing for individuals with exam findings that suggest a syndromic hearing loss etiology may include a variety of tests, including

genome sequencing, depending on clinical presentation. For individuals without physical findings that suggest a syndromic hearing loss etiology, they recommend a tiered approach, starting with comprehensive hearing loss gene panel testing unless a more specific genetic etiology is evident for which targeted testing is appropriate (p. 1400).

Li MM, Tayoun AA, DiStefano M, et al. Clinical evaluation and etiologic diagnosis of hearing loss: A clinical practice resource of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG). *Genet Med*. 2022;24(7):1392-1406. doi:10.1016/j.gim.2022.03.018

National Society for Genetic Counselors (NSGC)

The National Society for Genetic Counselors (NSGC) released a position statement (2013, updated 2020, reaffirmed 2023) stating the following in regard to secondary and incidental findings in genetic testing:

The National Society of Genetic Counselors strongly advises pre-test counseling that facilitates informed decision-making, elicits patient preferences regarding secondary and/or incidental findings if possible, and formulates a plan for returning such results before testing occurs.

Secondary and Incidental Findings in Genetic Testing. Position Statement from National Society of Genetic Counselors.

<https://www.nsgc.org/Policy-Research-and-Publications/Position-Statements/Position-Statements/Post/secondary-and-incidental-findings-in-genetic-testing-1>. Released September 27, 2013. Updated March 23, 2020. Reaffirmed 2023.

The National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) published evidence-based practice guidelines for individuals with unexplained epilepsy (2022). The NSGC recommendations are as follows (p. 4):

- Individuals with unexplained epilepsy should be offered genetic testing, without limitation of age.
- Multi-gene, comprehensive testing, such as exome sequencing, genome sequencing or a multigene panel as a first-tier test is strongly recommended.

Smith L, Malinowski J, Ceulemans S, et al. Genetic testing and counseling for the unexplained epilepsies: An evidence-based practice guideline of the National Society of Genetic Counselors. *J Genet Couns*. 2023;32(2):266-280. doi:10.1002/jgc4.1646

Patient-Centered Laboratory Utilization Guidance Services (PLUGS)

PLUGS released a guideline entitled “Genomic Sequencing for Rare Disease” in July of 2023. This guideline affirmed the medical necessity of exome sequencing when “(c)linical presentation does not fit a well-described syndrome for which more targeted testing is available”, the etiology remains unknown following clinical and radiological evaluation, and one of the following is true (p. 7):

- Specific features including epilepsy, bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, moderate to severe intellectual disability, global developmental delay, or multiple congenital anomalies are present OR
- A combination of personal and family history features including neuropsychiatric, metabolic, and single organ system abnormalities is present

The guideline also includes a recommendation to rule out alternate etiologies prior to testing, when possible.

Genomic Sequencing for Rare Disease. Seattle Children's Hospital Patient-centered Laboratory Utilization Guidance Services.

https://www.schplugins.org/wp-content/uploads/Genomic-Sequencing-in-Rare-Disease_2023_FINAL.pdf.
Effective July 2023.

Belanger, et al.

A review of the evaluation of children with global developmental delay and intellectual disability by Belanger, et al. (2018) defines global developmental delay (GDD) as the following:

- Significant delay (at least 2 standard deviations below the mean) in at least two developmental domains (gross or fine motor, speech/language, cognition, social/personal or activities of daily living (p. 404). This diagnosis is reserved for children under age 5.

Bélanger SA, Caron J. Evaluation of the child with global developmental delay and intellectual disability. *Paediatr Child Health*. 2018;23(6):403-419. doi:10.1093/pch/pxy093

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

This 2025 AAP report provided general guidance regarding genetic testing recommendations for individuals with global developmental delay (GDD) or intellectual

disability (ID). The AAP took into consideration the diagnostic yield, cost of testing, and test complexity (p. 4) and proposed a “tiered agnostic approach” to diagnostic evaluation of GDD/ID (p. 5). In this approach, the Tier 1 testing includes exome or genome sequencing; Tier 2 testing includes Fragile X and inborn errors of metabolism, and Tier 3 includes genome sequencing (if not already performed), as well as additional more specialized tests.

Rodan LH, Stoler J, Chen E, Geleske T; Council on Genetics. Genetic evaluation of the child with intellectual disability or global developmental delay: clinical report. *Pediatrics*. 2025;156(1):e2025072219. doi:10.1542/peds.2025-072219

DEFINITIONS

1. **Close relatives** include first, second, and third-degree blood relatives:
 - a. **First-degree relatives** are parents, siblings, and children
 - b. **Second-degree relatives** are grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and half siblings
 - c. **Third-degree relatives** are great grandparents, great aunts, great uncles, great grandchildren, and first cousins
2. **Congenital anomalies** (according to ACMG) are anomalies not specific to a well-delineated genetic syndrome. These are structural or functional abnormalities requiring medical intervention that are usually evident at birth, or shortly thereafter, and are consequential to an individual’s life expectancy, health status, or physical/social functioning.
3. **Developmental delay** (DD) is defined as slow-to-meet or not reaching milestones in one or more of the areas of development (communication, motor, cognition, social-emotional, or adaptive skills) in the expected way for a child’s age.
4. **Exome Sequencing** (ES) is a genomic technique for sequencing all of the protein-coding regions of genes in the genome (also known as the exome).
5. **Genome Sequencing** (GS) is a genomic technique for sequencing the complete DNA sequence, which includes protein coding as well as non-coding DNA elements.

6. **Global developmental delay** is diagnosed when a child under age 5 is slow-to-meet or not reaching milestones in the expected way for their age in at least two areas of development (communication, gross/fine motor, cognition, social-emotional, or adaptive skills). Examples include (but are not limited to): not sitting independently by 9 months; not crawling or rolling over by a year; not walking by 18 months (based on [CDC Developmental milestones](#)).
7. **Intellectual disability (ID)** is defined by the DSM V as an individual age 5 or older with either an IQ score of 70 or below, OR with a clinical diagnosis of intellectual disability per the DSM V, which includes all of the following:
 - a. Deficits in intellectual functions, such as reasoning, problem solving, planning, abstract thinking, judgment, academic learning, and learning from experience, confirmed by both clinical assessment and individualized, standardized intelligence testing.
 - b. Deficits in adaptive functioning that result in failure to meet developmental and sociocultural standards for personal independence and social responsibility. Without ongoing support, the adaptive deficits limit functioning in one or more activities of daily life, such as communication, social participation, and independent living, across multiple environments, such as home, school, work, and community.
 - c. Onset of intellectual and adaptive deficits during the developmental period.
8. **Trio Testing** is testing of the child and both biological/genetic parents, which increases the chances of finding a definitive diagnosis while reducing false-positive findings.