I. Authority

In accordance with 22 AAC 05.155, the Department will maintain a manual comprised of policies and procedures established by the Commissioner to interpret and implement relevant sections of the Alaska Statutes and 22 AAC.

II. References

Alaska Statutes
AS 33.30.011
AS 33.30.028

Alaska Administrative Code
22 AAC
05.120 22
AAC 05.121

Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions; 3rd Edition 1990
3-4358

Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities; 3rd Edition 1991
3-ADLF-4E-29

III. Purpose

To establish uniform procedures within the Department for the provision of medically essential health care prosthetics to prisoners.

IV. Application

All staff and prisoners.

V. Definitions

As used in this document, the following definition shall apply:

A. Prosthetic Devices

A prosthetic device is a medical or dental appliance designed to serve as an artificial replacement for a body part or function or as an adjunct to such function. Prosthetic devices include: artificial limbs; dentures; hearing aids; pacemakers; orbital spacers; eyeglasses; contact lenses; orthopedic braces or shoes; walkers; canes; wheelchairs, etc.

B. Visual Acuity

Visual acuity refers to a person's ability to see with corrective lenses if the person possesses corrective lens. Thus, a prisoner whose uncorrected visual acuity is 20/300 in both eyes is not entitled to immediate eyeglasses if the prisoner possesses a pair of glasses that corrects the prisoner's vision to 20/80.

VI. Policy

The Department shall provide medically essential health care prosthetics to a prisoner when lack of the prosthetic significantly impairs the health or daily functioning of the prisoner and prevents the prisoner from participating in or benefiting from rehabilitative services.
VII. Procedures

A. General

1. Qualifications for Prosthetic Devices
   The Department must verify that a prisoner will remain in custody long enough for the Department to make, fit, and adjust the prosthetic, and for the prisoner to realize the projected benefits of the device.

2. Authorization
   a. The health care practitioner and Medical Director shall decide if a health care prosthesis is medically essential. The Medical Director or health care practitioner must authorize the procurement of all prosthetics except eyeglasses.
   b. The Superintendent must approve prosthetic devices that could affect institutional security before their manufacture or delivery to a prisoner.
      (1) The Superintendent or designee must approve of ice spikes before they are attached to crutches or canes. The superintendent also must approve of any hazardous or operationally cumbersome items before they are given to a prisoner.

3. Searches
   Health care staff shall be involved, when appropriate, in removing a prisoner’s prosthesis if the Department needs to search it. See Policy 1208.08, Searches of Prisoners and Institutional Areas.

B. Dental Prosthetics
   See Policy 807.12, Dental Care.

C. Eyeglasses
   The Department shall give prisoners medically prescribed eyeglasses with plastic frames to correct their vision to a functional level. Prisoners may receive only one pair of eyeglasses every two years at Department expense unless an optometrist or ophthalmologist determines that additional eyeglasses are essential.

1. Pretrial Detainees
   The Department shall provide eyeglasses, as prescribed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, to pretrial detainees who are incarcerated for more than 30 days if:
   a. The prisoner requests the eyeglasses; and
   b. Health care staff determines that the prisoner meets Department criteria for corrective lenses.

2. Visual Acuity Criteria
   Prisoners must have a visual acuity of less than 20/40 in their best eye or a medical condition necessitating eyeglasses before they will be given eyeglasses at the Department’s expense. Prisoners with visual acuity of 20/100 or less in both eyes will receive priority care. The Department will provide eyeglasses right away to a prisoner whose vision is less than 20/200 in both eyes.
3. **Reading Glasses**
   The Department will provide reading glasses for presbyopic prisoners at the prisoner's expense. +1.00, +2.00, and +3.00 diopter half-frame reading glasses will be available through the pharmacy or commissary.

4. **Personalized or Modified Eyeglasses**
   Upon approval of the Superintendent, health care staff may provide the prisoner with a copy of the prisoner's prescription if the prisoner desires personalized frames or other modifications. The prisoner may send the approved prescription to an optician of the prisoner's choice at the prisoner's expense. The Department shall disburse the prisoner's funds for such payment through the special commissary from the prisoner's account. See Policy 302.12, Prisoner Accounts.
   a. Health care personnel may not initiate money transactions, transfer funds, or otherwise make arrangements for eyeglass modifications except by providing the prisoner with a copy of the prescription. The State is not responsible for repairs or costs involving personally procured eyeglasses.
   b. The Department will not purchase sunglasses, mirrored eyeglasses, photosensitive glasses, oversized lenses, contacts, or other nonessential modifications. The Department will only furnish tinted or sunglasses prescribed by an ophthalmologist.

5. **Record**
   Health care staff shall note the date that the prisoner received the eyeglasses in the prisoner's health care record and include a receipt, signed by the prisoner, to document the prisoner's receipt of the eyeglasses.

6. **Contact Lenses**
   The Department shall not furnish contact lenses to prisoners unless an optometrist or ophthalmologist certifies that a prisoner's vision is below the functional level and that eyeglasses cannot correct the defect.
   a. A prisoner may keep corrective contact lens that the prisoner is wearing when admitted to the institution as long as the lenses do not impair the prisoner's ability to carry out assigned tasks. Cosmetic contact lens are prohibited.

D. **Hearing Aids**
   1. A health care practitioner shall assess a prisoner's hearing ability during the prisoner's initial health screening.
   2. A prisoner shall be referred to an audiologist if the prisoner appears to have a severe or sudden hearing loss that impairs the prisoner's functioning in a daily living or rehabilitative program. The Medical Director shall approve the purchase of all required hearing aids.
E. Repair or Replacement

The Department shall maintain and dispose of prosthetics using the following guidelines:

1. The Department will pay for the repair or replacement of prosthetics damaged from normal wear or defects in materials or workmanship. The Department will not pay to repair or replace prosthetics that a prisoner damages by careless handling or willful negligence. In that case, the prisoner must pay all costs regardless of whether the Department or the prisoner originally purchased the prosthesis. Willful destruction of a prosthetic device may result in disciplinary action.
   a. The Superintendent shall enforce partial payment or installment payments by the prisoner over an appropriate period of time to repay the Department if a prisoner does not have sufficient funds for the required repair or replacement

2. Prosthetic devices provided for prisoners at the Department's expense remain the property of the State. However, the health care practitioner may allow a prisoner to keep a prosthesis that is personal in nature when the prisoner is released from custody. The State is not responsible for the replacement, repair, or maintenance of any prosthetic device after the prisoner's release from custody.

IX. Implementation

This policy and procedure is effective 14 days following the date signed by the Commissioner. Each Manager shall incorporate the contents of this document into local policy and procedure. All local policies and procedures must conform to the contents of this document; any deviation from the contents of this document must be approved in writing by the Division Director.

Date 12/30/09

Joseph Schmidt, Commissioner
Department of Corrections