OVERVIEW
Signal-averaged electrocardiography (SAECG) is a technique involving computerized analysis of small segments of a standard ECG to detect abnormalities, termed ventricular late potentials (VLPs), that would be otherwise obscured by “background” skeletal muscle activity.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
Not applicable.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable.

POLICY STATEMENT
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial
Signal-averaged electrocardiography is not medically necessary for BlueCHiP for Medicare members and Commercial products as there is insufficient medical literature to support the efficacy of this service.

COVERAGE
Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Evidence of Coverage, Subscriber Agreement or Benefit Booklet for not medically necessary coverage/benefits.

BACKGROUND
Ventricular late potentials (VLPs) reflect aberrant, asynchronous electrical impulses arising from viable isolated cardiac muscle bordering an infarcted area and are thought to be responsible for ventricular tachyarrhythmias. Therefore, VLPs, as measured by SAECG, have been investigated as a risk factor for arrhythmic events in patients with a variety of cardiac conditions, including cardiomyopathy and prior history of myocardial infarction (MI). Patients considered at high risk of ventricular arrhythmias and thus sudden death may be treated with drugs to suppress the emergence of arrhythmias or with implantable cardiac defibrillators (ICDs) to promptly detect and terminate tachyarrhythmias when they occur. Because sudden cardiac death, whether from arrhythmias or pump failure, is one of the most common causes of death after a previous MI, there is intense interest in risk stratification to target therapy. Patient groups are divided into those who have not experienced a life-threatening arrhythmia (i.e., primary prevention) and those who have (i.e., secondary prevention). SAECG is just one of many risk factors that have been investigated. Others include left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF), arrhythmias detected on Holter monitor or electrophysiologic studies, heart rate variability, and baroreceptor sensitivity. T-wave alternans is another technique for risk stratification; it measures beat-to-beat variability, while SAECG measures beat-averaged conduction.

SAECG has not demonstrated improvements in health outcomes and remains not medically necessary for all indications.

CODING
The following code is not medically necessary for BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial products:
93278  Signal-averaged electrocardiography (SAECG), with or without ECG
RELATED POLICIES
Not applicable.

PUBLISHED
Provider Update, July 2017
Provider Update, January 2017
Provider Update, May 2015
Provider Update, July 2014
Provider Update, September 2012
Provider Update, March 2012
Provider Update, January 2011
Provider Update, January 2010
Policy Update, January 2007
Policy Update, January 2006
Policy Update, November 2000
Professional Bulletin, June 1990

REFERENCES
This medical policy is made available to you for informational purposes only. It is not a guarantee of payment or a substitute for your medical judgment in the treatment of your patients. Benefits and eligibility are determined by the member's subscriber agreement or member certificate and/or the employer agreement, and those documents will supersede the provisions of this medical policy. For information on member-specific benefits, call the provider call center. If you provide services to a member which are determined to not be medically necessary (or in some cases medically necessary services which are non-covered benefits), you may not charge the member for the services unless you have informed the member and they have agreed in writing in advance to continue with the treatment at their own expense. Please refer to your participation agreement(s) for the applicable provisions. This policy is current at the time of publication; however, medical practices, technology, and knowledge are constantly changing. BCBSRI reserves the right to review and revise this policy for any reason and at any time, with or without notice. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.