

## CATEGORY RESOURCE GUIDE

# Softgoods and sports bracing

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### Vizient award overview

#### Awarded suppliers

MS7049 – Walgreen Health Solutions  
MS9231 – Breg  
MS9232 – DeRoyal Industries  
MS9233 – DJO

#### Distribution

Both direct and distributed through the following distribution channels:

Medical-surgical



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### Making supply uncertainty a thing of the past, not the future

To help members maintain supply assurance for essential products, Vizient shares insights via [category resource guides](#) on [vizientinc.com](http://vizientinc.com). These category-specific documents contain comprehensive manufacturing, logistics and utilization insights to help members source supplies with confidence. Category resource profiles are one way we're [building supply assurance together](#).

## Market landscape

Orthopedic bracing is a mature market driven by robust R&D, reimbursement and regulations to provide excellent patient care. The softgoods and sports bracing category was severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing supply disruptions throughout the market. In addition to supply disruption, this market witnessed a decline in end user demand, due to postponement of elective surgeries, restriction of sporting events and access to clinics. The market has since recovered, with a strong circulation of supply and increased end user demand, but production cost pressures still plague the market.

Key suppliers: DJO/Enovis, DeRoyal Industries, Breg Inc., Hanger Orthopedic Group, Aspen Medical Products, Ossur, Medline Industries and Walgreen Health Solutions

## Manufacturing insights

### Product overview

Orthopedic softgoods are utilized to prevent an end user's injured body part from moving. The goal is to prevent additional and future injuries, repair the injured area, and improve the recovery length and journey.

Product scope:

- Knee and shoulder brace: external bracing used to provide support to injured joint or ligament
- Postop shoes: used to protect the toes and foot after injury or surgery
- Knee and shoulder immobilizer: prevents the injured joint from moving as it heals
- Abdominal binders: compression belts that surround the abdomen to relieve pain, improve pulmonary function and stabilize an incision to enhance wound healing
- Walker boots: also known as a controlled ankle motion walking boot; used to protect the foot and ankle, and keep them stable after injury or surgery to expediate the healing process
- Cervical collars: used to immobilize and support the end user's neck by limiting the range of motion; often utilized by those who had head or neck trauma, or surgery
- Arm slings: used to stabilize and immobilize the end user's arm in the event of an injury

### OEM and manufacturing location

DJO/Enovis, DeRoyal and Walgreen Health Solutions are original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of all products. Breg is the OEM of a majority of its product line and distribute other supplier products. The majority of products are manufactured domestically or near-shore, primarily in Mexico.

### Raw materials

Primary raw materials consist of resin, steel, cotton, aluminum, pulp and polypropylene (PP), a plastic.

The latest manufacturing insights are available [here](#).

### Non-awarded suppliers

Medline, Hanger, Aspen Medical Products and Ossur are all non-contract suppliers that provide a full line in this category.

## Logistics insights

### Transportation/shipping

Products can be distributed or ordered directly, but they are typically purchased directly.

Suppliers' distribution and warehouse locations are primarily domestic and near-shore.

See additional freight update [here](#).

### Product storage

There are no special storage requirements. The warranty, depending on the product, ranges from three months to a year.

## Building supply assurance

### Conservation strategies

Because predicting the next supply shortage is impossible, it is important that healthcare providers not only adopt and implement care practices strategies to conserve critical products and supplies, but it is equally as important to sustain leading practices that will help ensure the availability of essential products post recovery and in the future. For example, some hospitals have reported decreasing their IV solution use by as much as 50% in some care areas by continuing to adhere to the conservation strategies implemented during the recent shortages

Healthcare providers and other leading organizations have identified and recommend the following actions:

- Consistent demand planning
- Stockpiling product from primary manufacturer/distributor
- Resiliency plan through domestic manufacturing

Additionally, with other products and services:

- Assess and identify all hospital services.
- Identify and list critical products, supplies, and resources required to sustain operation of those areas identified and ranked in the first step.
- Maintain the internal planning team document with accurate information. Review and update the document on a routine basis with current employee contact information. If a team member no longer works in the organization, identify the replacement and communicate the information to all stakeholders.
- Communicate practice changes and procedures frequently to staff and stakeholders.
- Hold regularly scheduled planning meetings in the absence of a supply chain shortage or event. This will help to ensure that identified processes and protocols remain relevant and any issues requiring revisions and/or updates are addressed in advance of a shortage or disaster.

If your organization has implemented conservation strategies for softgoods and sports bracing, or any other category, share your information [here](#). The information you share will be anonymous unless you grant Vizient permission to share.

### Supply chain programs

#### Diversity

Walgreen Health Solutions is a Vizient diversity supplier. Vizient's Supplier Diversity Program supports the development of minority-, woman-, disability-, LGBT- and veteran-owned business enterprises that meet high-quality standards. We also strive to work with suppliers who proactively seek strategic partnerships with diverse companies. For more information, click [here](#).

#### Novaplus

DeRoyal is a Vizient Novaplus® supplier. Through Novaplus, access to products goes deep with more than 15,000 individual line items – including numerous high-demand items. The brand encompasses a broad range of categories needed across the care continuum, such as anesthesia, business products and services, diagnostic imaging, food, laboratory, medical, orthopedic, pediatric, pharmacy, respiratory and surgical. Today as the capabilities, expertise and purchasing power of Vizient grow, we offer expanded value so you unlock even more from your private-label purchasing. For more information, click [here](#).

#### Impact Standardization

Breg, DeRoyal and DJO participate in the Impact Orthopedic Standardization Program, which improves procurement processes on commonly purchased products and financially rewards standardization efforts while reducing product variation and improving procurement processes on commonly purchased products. Since 1996, members have earned more than \$1.5 billion in cash rebates through the programs. With 12 programs to choose from and built-in flexibility within each program, it's easy to gain additional value beyond price for your organization. For more information, click [here](#).

## Pediatric Program

DeRoyal participates in the Vizient Pediatric Program – a supply chain program focused on delivering savings, quality and choice from an industry-leading pediatric product portfolio. Additional information is available [here](#).

## Planning for disruptions

Vizient offers the following best practices to help members manage disruptions. These suggestions are available to help you gain insight on how the industry is managing supply challenges.

### If your inventory is low

Vizient is committed to bringing hospitals, manufacturers, distributors and the industry together to talk about this issue and any long-term implications. We feel continued dialogue around the issue by experts – hospitals, manufacturers, distributors and industry – will be crucial to ultimately arriving at a solution to vexing issues. During critical supply periods, members should continue to order their normal levels of products in order to ensure continued availability for all institutions.

If you begin to experience a shortage:

- Evaluate your current supply.
- Contact your local supplier representative and report exactly how many days' supply you have left.
- If you are not getting a response from suppliers, contact Vizient so we can facilitate communication between member and supplier; provide whether you are ordering direct or through distribution (medical/surgical or pharmacy), and indicate supplier and distributor (if applicable) when you contact Vizient.
- We encourage you to continue the conversation within your organization, with your peers and with the manufacturers and distributors to identify ways to manage your ongoing needs.
- Submit inquiries to [disasterresponse@vizientinc.com](mailto:disasterresponse@vizientinc.com).

### Expedite supply resolution

To expedite resolution for supply issues, contact your local supplier and provide the following information:

- The description and item number of the product that is experiencing a shortage
- Whether you are purchasing directly or through an Authorized Distributor
- Days' supply remaining in your inventory

### If expanding your facility

We suggest members notify suppliers when expanding their facilities to assist in planning and anticipate increases in allocations. You should consider notifying your suppliers at least three months ahead of the completion of your facility to ensure sufficient capacity.

## Building supply assurance together

Collaboration among suppliers, distributors, members and Vizient strengthens the assurance of supply for all stakeholders. Our wealth of experience, actionable data and predictive planning helps to strengthen supply assurance. Further, our work with stakeholders focuses on improving supply chain risk mitigation as we collaborate to enhance data, increase supply visibility and expand inventory access.

Four themes keep us centered and are the pillars of our supply chain assurance efforts: insights, access, enablement and advocacy. [Learn more about our supply assurance strategy](#).

In the event of a supply disruption, Vizient will publish a [product disruption brief](#) to the [Supply Assurance webpage](#). Curated by Vizient experts, these documents provide a summary of current conditions and strategies to manage product-level disruptions.

In addition to our disruption briefs, Vizient also compiles all known disruptions into the monthly [Supply Update Executive Summary](#) which tracks all supply chain disruptors, including current market challenges, category-specific product updates and recovering markets.

Whether a supply disruption is the result of a natural or human-made disaster, it is imperative that members are informed. The [Vizient Disaster Preparedness webpage](#) was developed to help providers meet supply chain needs before, during and after an event. The Supply Update section of the guide is updated on a frequent and routine basis with communication from all awarded suppliers that have manufacturing facilities in areas impacted by a disaster. Additionally, a status update list of those manufacturers whose operations have been affected, as well as a list of impacted product(s), will be maintained and updated as that information is received from a supplier.

**The importance of an internal planning team**

Identifying an internal planning team is imperative to managing supply, mitigating risks and sustaining operations during a supply shortage. According to [the Supply Chain Disaster Preparedness Manual](#) developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), internal teams should consist of representatives from supply chain, purchasing, emergency management, each clinical/care delivery area, inventory staff, receiving and distribution staff. Relative to medication and solutions, Vizient member feedback indicated the pharmacy department as an integral member to the internal team, as clinical/pharmacy practice changes may occur. Additional members may include the facilities safety manager, security, risk management, legal, marketing and communications, and public relations.

A simple internal team planning document will help to identify, contact and quickly convene relevant team members. See the sample below:

Name	Title	Department/role	Phone	Email

Once an internal team is identified, additional considerations before beginning the development and implementation of a recovery plan include the following:

- The team’s goals
- The responsibilities of each planning team member
- Other department/team members who may need to be involved
- Frequency of team meetings
- How the goal/mission will be accomplished
- How information will be documented and communicated to the broader audience
- A current framework for success either within your facility or from a leading organization

**Stakeholder communication**

During supply chain product disruptions, it is vital that accurate and timely information is disseminated to internal and external stakeholders. The following actions should be considered in an effort to facilitate and ensure informed decisions:

- Designate the point person or persons who will be responsible for developing, disseminating and monitoring all communications coming from the internal planning team.
- The internal planning team should collaborate key messages/information to stakeholders, such as changes in policies and/or practice changes.

- Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of all staff based on the agreed upon recovery plan. If there are changes to the plan at any time, timely communication of those changes will help to increase risk mitigation and minimize interruption of patient care.
- Establish communication mechanisms for information exchange. Examples include but are not limited to regularly scheduled briefings and meetings, in-services, staff trainings, live/recorded webinars, memos and emails.
- Determine the frequency of reminders and updates regarding supply disruption status and anticipated resolution.
- Frequent updates and reminders after a supply disruption has been mitigated or eliminated help to ensure ongoing success and sustainability of best practices.

## Supply management and logistics

A leading practice identified in managing recent shortages is a centralized management approach of impacted product codes. A key responsibility of the internal planning group is to identify all affected product codes and to determine the amount of supply on hand, expected and any allocation protocols implemented by the supply source. Once the current product status is determined, the following actions are recommended:

- Update and maintain an accurate inventory list. Each care area that utilizes any product code on the inventory list should identify a point person to collect on hand and usage levels on an agreed upon frequency. That information should be reported back to the internal planning team. Inventory can either be managed by care delivery areas or in a centralized manner.
- Identify space in the facility to store, manage and distribute product. Designate authorized personnel responsible for maintaining the inventory (expiration dates temperature, ventilation, utilization, equipment maintenance and repair, etc.).
- Develop and seek approval for the inventory management protocol and communicate this information to all stakeholders.
- Update and maintain accurate purchase order and allocation protocols from the contracted supplier and your group purchasing organization (GPO).
- Update and maintain accurate emergency contact information for all suppliers as well as internal stakeholders. This process should be done at least every six months.
- Review the inventory management status on an agreed upon frequency with the internal planning group. Assess for barriers to its effectiveness, implement any changes necessary and communicate those changes to all stakeholders.

## Planning for all levels of care and ancillary products

Feedback from lessons learned indicated the need to include all levels of care and ancillary products, if applicable, in the conservation plan. If your provider system has children's hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, outpatient clinics and/or long-term care facilities, utilization and logistics of products and supplies must be incorporated into the plan. Additionally, it is vital that ancillary products are considered when contemplating allocations and purchase orders. For example, during the recent drugs and solutions shortages, as large volume solution bags went on back order, smaller volume bags, compounding products, and syringes also went on back order because of practice changes. Therefore, conservation planning should include actual and the additional ancillary products that may be required to sustain a clinical and/or operational practice change.



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As the nation's largest member-driven health care performance improvement company, Vizient provides solutions and services that empower health care providers to deliver high-value care by aligning cost, quality and market performance. With analytics, advisory services and a robust sourcing portfolio, we help members improve patient outcomes and lower costs.