

ASHA's 2013 Public Policy Agenda and Key Federal Issues

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2013 Public Policy Agenda (PPA) Survey and Input from Members

2013 Public Policy Agenda (PPA)


- Created by Government Relations and Public Policy Board through input from ASHA members
- Over 4000 comments were received and reviewed.
- As a result, 11 issue areas were identified.



Changes in 2013 PPA

	2012 PPA	2013 PPA
Categories	Education Issues Healthcare Issues Professional Issues	State State-Federal Federal
Priority Levels	Proactive Advocacy Opportunistic Advocacy	Priority

- ASHA'S PPA – 11 Issue Objectives**
- Federal Level
- Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage Policies
- Federal and State Level
- Federal and State Funding for Services of School Based Members
 - Hearing Health Care
 - Loan Forgiveness as a Recruitment and Retention Tool
 - Medicaid Reimbursement and Coverage Policies
 - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
 - Private Health Plans Reimbursement and Coverage Policies
 - Telepractice
- State Level
- Comprehensive (Universal) Licensure
 - Service Continuum
 - State Consultants

- Federal: Advocate for Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage – 2013 PPA**
- Advocate for equitable reimbursement for SLPs/Auds and coverage for beneficiaries of Medicare health plans
 - Support alternative payment policy to Medicare therapy caps
 - Support reform of Sustainable Growth Rate formula in determining reimbursement under Medicare Part B fee schedule
 - Support coverage of comprehensive audiology benefit with opt out provisions
 - Represent professions before CMS for maintenance or expansion of appropriate values and coverage
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Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage –Therapy Cap Exceptions

Advocacy in Action

- Successfully lobbied Congress twice in the last year to extend the therapy cap exceptions process. One of three Medicare extenders (out of 15) to be included in legislation.
- Worked with APTA, AOTA, and others to develop alternatives to the therapy caps to present to House and Senate Committees.
- Actively advocated with CMS and MedPAC on regulatory issues related to the implementation of the therapy cap exceptions process.



Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage – Therapy Caps & MPPR

Advocacy in Action

- ASHA supports S. 367 and H.R. 713, *The Medicare Access to Rehabilitation Services Act of 2013* (in current Congress), legislation that would repeal the Medicare Outpatient Therapy Cap.
- ASHA supports rescinding the Multiple Procedure Payment Reductions enacted by Congress in January.



Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage – MFS & SGR

Advocacy in Action

- ASHA collaborated with other organizations (AMA) to prevent cuts of 26.5% in the Medicare Fee Schedule (MFS) from 2012.
- ASHA submitted comments to the House Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce committees on an alternate payment system based on a new system of quality measures to replace the current Sustainable Growth Rate formula used to determine MFS at an estimated cost of \$138 billion over 10 years.



Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage – Comprehensive Audiology Benefit

Advocacy in Action

- Rep. Bilirakis (R-FL) of the House Energy and Commerce Committee has agreed to introduce ASHA’s Comprehensive Audiology Bill.
- The bill would allow audiologists to bill for hearing and balance assessment services, auditory treatment services (including auditory processing and auditory rehabilitation treatment), vestibular treatment, and intraoperative neurophysiologic monitoring.
- Audiologists will have the option to opt-out of Medicare and the bill does not include hearing aids.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA-Funding Services of School-Based Members

- Advocate reauthorization of ESEA & IDEA and inclusion of audiology and SLP in federal literacy legislation.
- Support common terminology, use of term “highest qualified provider” in ESEA and IDEA.
- Promote appropriate accountability/evaluation measures for specialized instructional support personnel.
- Oppose cuts in education funding.
- Seek to reduce paperwork & administrative burden on school-based SLPs.
- Advocate for state adoption of IDEA Part C Infants & Family Program requirements and waivers in maintenance of effort.
- Promote reallocation of IDEA Part D funds.





Funding Services of School-Based Members – IDEA Funding

- Since its inception, IDEA has protected students with disabilities by ensuring access to a free and appropriate public education.
- ASHA supports to preserve IDEA funding for Special Education.
- When enacted, Congress was to fund the federal share, a commitment to fund 40% of the additional cost of educating students with special needs.
- The highest % Congress has funded was in 2005 at 18%. Current funding is a little over 15%.
- After \$598 million cut due to the automatic budget cuts of sequestration, final funding for fiscal year 2013 for IDEA Part B is expected to be \$11.4 billion. This is \$13 billion short of the FY2011 authorized level for students with disabilities.



Funding Services of School-Based Members – Federal Literacy & Reading Programs

- ASHA supports federal legislation giving local school districts the flexibility to use qualified and certified education professionals, such as audiologists and SLPs, as recognized providers of service under federal literacy and reading legislation and programs.
- SLPs provide early identification, assessment, and appropriate intervention for students with or at risk of developing a communication disorder; SLPs develop literacy programs in school settings.
- Audiologists play an important role in the identification and management of hearing loss and auditory processing disorders, a frequent cause of language delay and reading difficulties.

Funding Services of School-Based Members –Paperwork Burden

Advocacy in Action



- Developed work plan for paperwork reduction initiative.
- Met with the U.S. Department of Education and other stakeholder groups.
- Held two focus groups at the Schools Conference.
- Facilitated internal focus groups.
- Convened multi-stakeholder group meeting in 2013 to develop comprehensive legislative and regulatory strategy.

Funding Services of School-Based Members - PACE

Advocacy in Action

- Developed Performance and Contributions of Effectiveness of Speech-Language Pathologists (PACE), as an accountability and evaluation tool in the schools.
- Promoted to the Department of Education and others.
- Communicated with Members of Congress about ASHA's proactive engagement in developing accountability measures.
- Met with Department of Education officials at the state level to consider adopting PACE.



Funding Services of School-Based Members – ED Outreach Plan

Advocacy in Action

- ASHA developed and submitted comments on ED’s Draft Strategic Plan for FY 2011-2014 - our advocacy efforts resulted in the following successes related to Goals 2 and 4.
- Goal 2. Elementary and Secondary: inclusion of specialized instructional support personnel.
- Goal 4: Equity: inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Promote Hearing Health Care

- Promote hearing aid tax credit legislation.
- Stronger FDA regulations for sale of hearing aids and PSAPs.
- Support FTC oversight of deceptive advertising practices of sale of PSAPs.
- Support reasonable, cost-effective OSHA and ANSI standards to reduce noise-induced hearing loss.
- Promote comprehensive system of children’s hearing health care services, including state screening standards, coverage of hearing aids and cochlear implants and implementation of EHDI.



Hearing Health Care - Federal

Advocacy in Action

- Introduced Hearing Aid Tax Credit legislation and reinvigorated Congressional Hearing Health Caucus.
- With other audiology organizations, developed joint letter related to reimbursement and access to hearing aids and devices.
- Developed resources for our members related to changes in purchase/selling of a hearing aid.
- Submitted joint letter to the FDA on concerns related to the marketing of personal sound amplification products.
- Pushed to eliminate use of online screen for purchase of a hearing aid (hi Health).



Hearing Health – Classroom Acoustics

Advocacy in Action

- In an effort to address classroom acoustics, ASHA submitted a code amendment to the International Code Council's (ICC) A117.1 building code which would add a national classroom acoustics standard into the building code.
- The amended building code pertains to access for persons with disabilities.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Loan Forgiveness as Recruitment/Retention Tool

- Support strategies to increase recruitment and retention of audiologists and SLPs through financial aid and loan forgiveness.
- Monitor federal incentives pertaining to Pell and Stafford loans.
- Support state efforts on loan forgiveness.



Loan Forgiveness Initiatives

Advocacy in Action

- Worked to ensure student loan interest rates for student loans were not increased.
- Promote legislation that provides loan forgiveness for audiologists and speech-language pathologists.
- Support *Access to Frontline Health Care Act* for loan repayment in scarcity areas.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Medicaid Reimbursement and Coverage Policies

- Advocate for coverage of services provided by SLPs and Audiologists mandated by EPSDT program.
- Promote reimbursement of devices, including hearing aids, cochlear implants, AAC and other devices.



Medicaid Reimbursement

Advocacy in Action

- Formalized an ASHA standing committee to address Medicaid issues.
- Medicaid committee met with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) Director responsible for Medicaid benefits to discuss coverage and issues.
- Opposed federal legislative efforts to reduce Medicaid funding.
- Commenting on Republican "Making Medicaid Work" Blueprint.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)

- Support state adoption of PPACA requirements, including Essential Health Benefits and coverage of rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices used by audiologists and SLPs.



Implementation of Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Advocacy in Action

- Founding member of the HAB coalition.
- Provided comments for inclusion of habilitative and rehabilitative coverage of services and devices offered by audiologists and SLPs and other regulations developed to implement ACA.
- Developed technical assistance to support in the inclusion of speech-language pathology and audiology services and devices in state insurance exchanges.
- www.asha.org/practice/health-care-reform/

Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Private Health Plans and Coverage Policies

- Advocate for coverage of services and devices provided by audiologists and SLPs.
- Assist members insurance appeals for medically necessary services.



Private Health Plans and Coverage Policies

Advocacy in Action

- With SIG 3 prepared voice-related letters for use in appeals.
- Support members and consumers in appealing health plan denials including successful appeals for cognitive rehab (CR) and stuttering.
- Successes achieved in coverage of CR by Tri Care and two regional Blue Cross Blue Shield plans to include stroke etiology.



Federal-State: 2013 PPA - Telepractice

- Advocate for recognition and coverage of services delivered through telepractice.
- Monitor opportunities to advocate for funding through federal and state legislation and regulation.



Telepractice



Advocacy in Action

- ASHA successfully advocated with state Medicaid agencies to include telepractice as reimbursable service.
- ASHA served as Co-Chair of the licensure portability committee of the American Telehealth Association (ATA).
- ASHA presented sessions at ATA, National Alliance for Medicaid in Education (NAME) and numerous state associations.
- Helped create ASHA telepractice video, designed to assist members and policy makers.
- Promoted inclusion of telepractice provisions in state licensure legislation and regulation.

For additional information

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Questions
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