

**CSAP- ASHA's Federal Agenda in
Action and Outlook**

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Disclosure



- **Financial Interest** – I am a FTE of ASHA – Director of Government Relations and Public Policy
- **Non-Financial Interest** - None

State of the Union in 2016

- "According to a new estimate, Congress has had a full work week just 14 percent of the time since 1978. Congress said they planned to address the report next week because it's already Tuesday." —Jimmy Fallon.
- There are always too many Democratic congressmen, too many Republican congressmen, and never enough US congressmen. —Author Unknown
- "The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything." —Joseph Stalin

Strategic Pathway 5 – Increase Influence and Demonstrated Value of Audiology and SLP Services

- Increase Member Engagement
- Provide Educational Materials
- Increase Outcomes of KPIs that Demonstrate Value



Active Member Engagement

- In 2015, 10,801 members sent 38,134 messages to Capitol Hill and their state legislatures.
- 15 different ASHA committees/groups did Hill visits, plus students.



“What Have You Done For Me Lately?”



Federal Agenda in Action and Outlook



Federal Issues



“We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress.” Will Rogers.

Medicare Reimbursement and Coverage Policies

- President Obama signed into law the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), which repealed the old Medicare payment formula (SGR) and replaced it with a new one based on quality, outcomes, and a merit-based payment system.
- ASHA and HCEC developing standards (resource use, quality, clinical improvement) for professions to comply with new law.

Medicare Therapy Caps



- Medicare therapy cap exceptions process extended 2 years (April 2017). Came within 2 votes in Senate of having caps considered for repeal vote.
- Medical Manual Review Extended for most Severe Cases. ASHA seeks transparent process.
- Outlook: Seek repeal in next Congress.

Comprehensive Medicare Audiology Benefit for Treatment Services



- Increased number of cosponsors (30+) and support for Medicare Coverage of Audiology Services Act (H.R. 1116).
- Outlook: May get House vote and CBO score this year.

Advocate for Fair and Relevant Reimbursement Codes



- Audiology and speech-language pathology codes identified by the AMA RUC RAW screens 92557 (comprehensive audiometric testing), 92567 (tympanometry), and 92507 (speech-language treatment) were successfully removed from screen, preventing a potential decrease in value for each code and their code families.

Allow Medicare Beneficiaries the Right to Speech-Generating Devices



- President Obama signed Steve Gleason Act of 2015.
- Clarifies CMS policy that eye-tracking accessories for SGDs are a Medicare covered benefit.
- Law also removed SGDs from CMS' capped-rental rules for several years, which allows patients to purchase their own devices.

Ensure Reimbursement for Cochlear Implant Follow-Up Services Through (HOPPS)



- ASHA submitted comments regarding cochlear implant (CI) follow-up services (CPT codes 92601–92604), which were previously designated in the HOPPS as not separately payable services.
- CMS accepted ASHA and other stakeholder comments to recognize CI follow-up services as separately payable.

Promote Reauthorization of Federal Education Legislation

- President Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act, which reauthorized and replaced Elementary Secondary and Education Act (aka No Child Left Behind).
- More control to states.
- Students required to take statewide assessments every year from 3rd to 8th grade. Schools have to report results of those tests.
- States to develop a system to hold schools accountable for their progress toward goals.

ESSA –ASHA’s 4 Policy Concepts Incorporated in Law

- 1) Added flexibility by expanding "early intervening services".
- 2) Preserved federal role in literacy that includes school-based audiologists and SLPs.
- 3) Increased professional development opportunities for ASHA's school-based members.
- 4) Adopted new term specialized instructional support personnel in lieu of the antiquated, pupil services personnel.

Therapies for Autism Spectrum Disorder

- ASHA reached out to ED that SLPs should be included in Guidance on treatment of ASD.
- ED issued Dear Colleague Letter recognizing role of SLPs in treating children with ASD.



Ensure Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs

- ED and HHS released a policy statement.
- All young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support.



Assist in Setting New Building Standards to for Classroom Acoustics



- ANSI Committee responsible for updating the International Code Council's A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities standards has formally adopted an amendment establishing a classroom acoustics standard.
- ASHA led effort.

Federal-State Issues



"It's not tyranny we desire; it's a just, limited, federal government."
Alexander Hamilton

Promote Funding and Manage Practice Issues for School-Based Members and Early Intervention Services



- Due to efforts of ASHA and education coalitions, Congress approved FY 2016 Omnibus Appropriations Act \$14.9 billion for Title I grants to local educational agencies.
- Represents \$500 million more than the 2015 level, and \$11.9 billion for special education state grants (IDEA) -- \$415 million more than 2015 level.

Paperwork Burden



- GAO released study reconfirming elements ASHA had identified as contributing to the problem of excessive paperwork and administrative burdens.
- GAO failed to make any recommendations to Congress to fix or decrease the problem.
- Outlook: ASHA will continue to work with House leadership to find solutions to paperwork problem.

Hearing Health - Hearing Aid Tax Credit



- Hearing aid tax credit legislation, H.R. 1882 and S. 315, would provide for a \$500 tax credit towards the purchase of a hearing aid.
- The tax credit would apply to all individuals and could be used every 3 years.
- Outlook: Not likely to pass this Congress.

Hearing Health – OTC Hearing Aids



- ASHA opposed President's Council on Science and Technology (PCAST), Institute of Medicine (IOM), and FDA proposal to create a new class of OTC hearing aids for mild-to-moderate hearing loss and to rescind PSAP Guidance.
- Outcome: The FDA may take action by year end.

Utilize Loan Forgiveness as a Recruitment and Retention Tool



- ASHA sought support for the Access to Frontline Health Care Act (H.R. 1707).
- Bill would establish student loan repayment program for health professionals who provide 2 years of service in scarcity areas.
- Outcome: Bill has 9 cosponsors and includes audiologists and SLPs as part of the identified health professions.

ACA-Essential Health Benefits

- Habilitation is a required benefit under essential health benefits for health plans participating in state health insurance exchanges.
- Qualified health plans are no longer permitted to determine the scope of or define habilitative services.
- HHS also requires separate limits on habilitative and rehabilitative services beginning with the 2017 plan year.



ACA- Essential Health Benefits

- ASHA was successful in urging HHS to adopt the NAIC definition of habilitation as the uniform definition.
- ASHA developed an advocacy tool for state associations and members for advocating with their state legislatures for inclusion of habilitative and rehabilitative services and devices provided by audiologists and SLPs in health plans participating in the health exchanges.



Advocate with Private Health Plans on Reimbursement and Coverage Policies

- ASHA communicated with several health plans requesting that clinical policy bulletins list appropriate diagnostic codes consistent with coverage, which have resulted in changes/updates being made.



Promote the Use of Telepractice

- ASHA supports CONNECT for Health Act (S. 2484/H.R. 4442) that allows audiologists and SLPs participating in Medicare Advantage plans and alternative payment models to be reimbursed for providing services through telehealth technology.
- ASHA is also supporting legislation to allow audiologists and SLPs to be reimbursed by Medicare for providing services through telehealth technology.
- Outlook: ASHA is sharing cost analysis data with Congressional Budget Office which prepares analysis of how much proposed legislation would cost.

Preserve the Scope of Practice

- ASHA, AAA, and ADA are continuing to mount opposition to the Veterans' Access to Hearing Health Act of 2015 (H.R. 353).
- This bill would enable the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to hire hearing aid specialists to help address the increasing demand for hearing aid services.
- The audiology organizations met with Department of Labor officials seeking modifications to an apprenticeship program for hearing aid specialists proposed by the International Hearing Society.
- Outlook: The Veterans bill sponsor is discussing modifications with us as well as DOL.

GRPP Main web Links

Legislation-Advocacy website, 2016 PPA:
• www.asha.org/advocacy

ASHA State-by-State:
• www.asha.org/advocacy/state/default.htm

Take Action:
• <http://takeaction.asha.org/asha2home/>

Billing, Reimbursement, Hearing Aids, PPACA:
www.asha.org/practice/reimbursement

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Questions

“When you stop learning, stop listening, stop looking and asking questions, always new questions, then it is time to die.”

Lillian Smith

www.asha.org
