



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

# Representing Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

## KEY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association • 444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 715 • Washington, DC 20001 • [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

### SUPPORT OUR ISSUES

### American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Provide Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit

Protect IDEA Funding From Sequestration

Include SLPs and Audiologists in Literacy Programs

Reduce the Paperwork and Administrative Burden

Support Medicare Coverage of Audiology Services

Repeal the Medicare Outpatient Therapy Cap

Join the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 145,000 members and affiliates who are speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists in the United States and internationally.

#### Vision

Making effective communication, a human right, accessible and achievable for all.

#### Mission

Empowering and supporting speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists by:

- Advocating on behalf of persons with communication and related disorders
- Advancing communication science
- Promoting effective human communication



Who are we?

We are audiologists.

We are speech-language pathologists.

We provide services to children and adults in your district.



**We are your constituents!**



## Protect IDEA Funding From Sequestration

### Protect the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from automatic federal budget cuts.



SEQUESTRATION WOULD  
PRODUCE SPENDING  
REDUCTIONS EVERY YEAR

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities, including speech, language, and hearing disorders.
- Since the passage of IDEA, millions of children with speech-language and hearing disorders have benefited from receiving additional services to help them succeed in the classroom.
- According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) sequestration would produce spending reductions every year ranging from 7.8% (in 2013) to 5.5% (in 2021) on programs such as IDEA.
- Sequestration will harm students with disabilities by shifting the financial burden onto state and local governments, which are already cash-strapped.
- Reductions in programs for children with disabilities have already contributed over \$120 billion to federal deficit reduction since 2006 due to the government's failure to properly fund IDEA.
- The sequestration process will result in job losses for speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

### Include Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists in Literacy Programs

#### Permit local school districts to use speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists as recognized providers of service under federal literacy programs.

- Literacy is an essential prerequisite for social well-being, academic achievement, and lifetime opportunities.
- SLPs provide early identification, assessment, and appropriate interventions to children with or at risk of communication disorder, and development of 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.
- SLPs have extensive training and education to recognize and understand individual differences in typical and disordered language development.
- SLPs possess the foundational knowledge of language and its subsystems: phonology (speech sound systems), morphology (word structures), syntax (grammar), semantics (vocabulary), and pragmatics (social language), which enables them to design emergent literacy programs in phonological awareness, memory, retrieval, and vocabulary that significantly improve an individual's ability to learn to read.
- Audiologists are involved in the identification and diagnosis of hearing disorders, the provision of auditory training, and the selection and fitting of appropriate personal and classroom amplification systems (e.g., hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM, and sound field systems). The ability to hear and recognize all of the phonetic aspects of speech is critical

### Reduce the Paperwork and Administrative Burden on Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

#### Allow speech-language pathologists and audiologists to spend more time on direct services and less time on administrative and paperwork requirements.

- Administrative and paperwork requirements in the reauthorization of both the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) pressure states and school districts to focus on compliance and meeting mandates which pressures SLPs and audiologists to reduce their time spent with children with disabilities.
- The paperwork and administrative burden is no single entity's fault. All levels of government contribute to the total burden the individual clinician shoulders as well as nongovernmental factors such as inconsistent documentation systems, formats, and technologies among and between school districts and states.
- The paperwork and administrative burden adversely affects... The school districts' ability to -
  - ◇ recruit and retain qualified SLPs and audiologists
  - ◇ provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education

#### The SLP's and audiologists ability to -

- ◇ collaborate with classroom teachers and other related service providers
- ◇ develop and implement innovative treatment plans and best practices
- ◇ collaborate and communicate with families
- ◇ tailor curriculum and therapy as needed to achieve academic success

## Support Medicare Coverage of Audiology Services

### Support legislation that would allow for coverage under Medicare for audiologic services to determine hearing loss and provide for rehabilitative services.

- Legislation would permit Medicare beneficiaries to seek both diagnostic and professional services of an audiologist for their hearing health and balance issues.
- The legislation would level the playing field in allowing audiologists to provide Medicare covered services such as auditory rehabilitation.
- Under current law, audiology services are recognized for Medicare purposes as a diagnostic test under the Social Security Act. There is no specific audiology benefit provided in the law.
- The legislation would not include hearing aids or services related to the dispensing of hearing aids.
- An actuarial analysis of the legislation found the cost to be nominal.
- Hearing impairments decrease individual's independence and may lead to isolation, depression, and poorer social relationships.
- According to an ASHA/AARP survey, a large majority of older Americans (68%) feel that hearing health issues do not receive enough attention compared to other health concerns.

## Provide Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit

### Support the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit H.R. 1479 and S. 905.

- H.R. 1479 and S. 905, the "Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act," provide for a tax credit of up to \$500 per hearing aid every 5 years. While the Senate legislation offers this credit for anyone who purchases a hearing aid, the House legislation stipulates it be for children up to the age of 21 and individuals 55 and older and only be available to households earning less than \$200,000 annually.
- Hearing aids are not covered under Medicare or under the vast majority of state-mandated benefits. Sixty-one percent of hearing aid purchases involve no third party payment, which places the entire burden on the patient.
- The average cost for a hearing aid in 2010 was approximately \$1,700. For those with hearing loss requiring two devices, the average out-of-pocket expense was over \$3,400. According to an ASHA/AARP survey, a large majority (63%) of seniors cite health insurance coverage limitations, concerns about cost, and lack of health insurance as reasons for not seeking treatment. Also, 65% report they would seek treatment for hearing problems if they were sure they could afford to do so.

## Join the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus

### The CHHC aims to provide an educational setting for discussion of issues related to hearing health.

- Hearing loss is among the most prevalent birth conditions in America, affecting 3 in 1,000 births, and an increasing number of younger people are experiencing hearing loss caused by exposure to loud noise.
- Hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) are the number one injury that soldiers experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- It is estimated that untreated hearing impairments cost the U.S. economy \$56 billion in lost productivity, special education, and medical care—an annual per capita tax of \$216.
- Contact Rep. Latham or Rep. McCarthy's office to join the CHHC.

## Repeal the Medicare Outpatient Therapy Caps

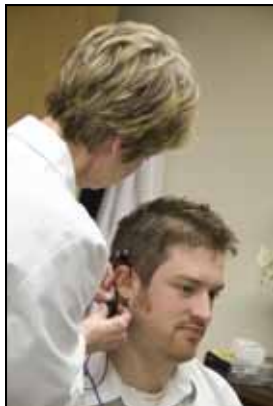
### Support legislation that would repeal the annual cap on therapy services under Part B of Medicare.

- The original cap on Part B Medicare therapy services was intended as a cost control mechanism on speech-language pathology and physical therapy services.
- It is clear that the cap achieves no real cost savings and only serve to deny care to the patients who are in most critical need.
- Congress recognized that the cap was detrimental to Medicare patients when it instituted a moratorium and extended it several times.
- Repealing the cap would ensure that all Medicare therapy patients have access to high-quality care, and it would remove the current uncertainty that makes it difficult for providers to plan for the future.



There are over 126,219 ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists.

- More than 57% work in educational facilities.
- 38% are employed in health care facilities
- Almost 15% are employed in nonresidential health care facilities including home health settings, private practice offices, and speech and hearing centers.



There are over 11,970 ASHA-certified audiologists.

- About 47% provide services in nonresidential health care facilities, including private physician offices, private practices, and speech and hearing centers.
- More than 72% are employed in hospitals.
- About 17% work in educational facilities—
  - ◇ 9% in schools
  - ◇ 8% in colleges and universities.

Some audiologists contract to provide services in schools, hospitals, or nursing homes. The majority of audiologists provide direct clinical services, but others serve as program administrators, university professors, scientists, consultants, and expert witnesses.

## Speech-Language Pathologists

Addressing the full range of human communication and its disorders, speech-language pathologists

- evaluate and diagnose speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders,
- treat speech, language, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly.

In addition, speech-language pathologists may

- prepare future professionals in colleges and universities;
- manage agencies, clinics, organizations, or private practices;
- engage in research to enhance knowledge about human communication processes;
- supervise and direct public school or clinical programs;
- develop new methods and equipment to evaluate problems;
- establish more effective treatments;
- investigate behavioral patterns associated with communication disorders.

Speech-language pathologists often work as part of a team, which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, rehabilitation counselors, and others. Corporate speech-language pathologists also work with employees to improve communication with their customers.

## Dually Certified

There are 1,195 persons who hold dual ASHA certification. That is, they are certified as both audiologists and speech-language pathologists. These individuals hold many major positions in clinical, academic, and research fields.

## Audiologists

Hearing is one of our most vital senses, and audiologists are experts in the nonmedical management of the auditory and balance systems. They specialize in the study of

- normal and impaired hearing
- prevention of hearing loss
- identification and assessment of hearing and balance problems
- rehabilitation of persons with hearing and balance disorders
- hearing aids and hearing assistive technology systems.

In addition, audiologists may:

- prepare future professionals in colleges and universities
- manage agencies, clinics or private practices
- engage in research to enhance knowledge about normal hearing and the evaluation and treatment of hearing disorders
- design hearing instruments and testing equipment.