

Audiological Evaluation of Child

April 12, 2006

XYZ Health Plan
500 Main Street, Suite 101
Washington, DC 20011

Re: Hearing Evaluations for Infants and Children

Dear Claims Department:

XYZ Health Plan recently denied an audiological evaluation for a young child indicating that it was not a covered benefit. This letter is intended to encourage XYZ to review its coverage policy and to allow coverage of hearing evaluations for infants and young children.

Federal legislation has been introduced supporting infant hearing screening, and many states have laws requiring hearing screening for at-risk babies. It is my hope that XYZ's coverage practices will recognize current standards of practice, which support such legislative efforts, and include audiological services for infants and young children. Research shows that 5 out of 1,000 children have hearing loss, which can be acquired or congenital. It affects speech production, language, and cognition. Children with hearing loss benefit from the services of audiologists and speech-language pathologists. Early identification of hearing loss and intervention reduces the consequences of hearing impairment. Children receiving early treatment are significantly better in the use of residual hearing, auditory development, and language competence, as indicated in the enclosed treatment efficacy summary report.

Audiologists identify hearing loss in infants and young children through hearing screening programs, including auditory brainstem response testing and measurement of otoacoustic emissions (the response of the inner ear to incoming sounds). Treatment may include the selection and fitting of hearing aids by audiologists. Speech-language pathologists provide the necessary speech-language services. These services are provided for medical conditions (hearing loss) and should be covered by health plans. Educational issues also may need to be addressed. However, the purpose of this letter is to focus on the medical condition and appropriate treatment, that is, diagnostic audiology services and speech-language pathology services.

I am available to discuss coverage of audiology services with you and will contact you in the near future to offer assistance.

Sincerely,

John A. Smith, MA, CCC-A