

Advocacy Priorities for Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists



Government Affairs and Public Policy Board

The 2025-2026 Public Policy Agenda was developed by ASHA volunteer members who served on the Government Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) Board during 2024-2025. The GAPP Board is charged with:

- Developing ASHA's public policy agenda for adoption by the Board of Directors.
- Ensuring that ASHA members' needs and interests are represented in the public policy agenda.
- Providing ongoing coordination of communication with other ASHA committees, councils, boards, members, and state speech-language-hearing associations concerning the legislative, regulatory, and other public policy activities and initiatives of ASHA in partnership with its members.
- Making recommendations to—and working with—the ASHA staff to develop strategies that achieve the public policy agenda.
- Selecting an individual to receive the ASHA Award for Public Service.

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Members of the GAPP Board wrapping up a day of Hill visits. Pictured (L-R): Bill Benson, Deborah Ross Swain, Sinetra Bowdry, Lisa Guerette, Chanel Hudson, Kelly Ball, Nicole Raia, and Julie Verhoff.



Dear ASHA Members,

The *2025–2026 Public Policy Agenda* is a document outlining key federal and state public policy priorities that inform and guide ASHA’s advocacy efforts in partnership with its members. This edition marks a significant and strategic shift from developing the agenda annually to establishing it every other year. Moving to a biennial Public Policy Agenda allows ASHA, in conjunction with its members, more time to be deliberate and comprehensive in pursuing advocacy initiatives—ensuring these efforts have the time and resources needed to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Member input for this document was obtained through survey data—including open commentary and measures of importance on a wide range of topics—as well as through feedback provided in various ways to ASHA staff and the Government Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) Board. The 2025-2026 Public Policy Agenda was developed by ASHA volunteer members who served on the GAPP Board during 2024-2025. The Public Policy Agenda identifies priorities designed to address the challenges members have identified as critical to their ability to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

ASHA recognizes that a wide variety of challenges impact members. Many issues, such as regulating workload, are dynamic and influenced by factors outside the scope of ASHA’s authority. Other challenges may be highly case-specific, such as workplace setting (e.g., school district-level policies). These dynamic and specific advocacy needs are not highlighted individually in the Public Policy Agenda but are addressed within broader categories, such as workforce priorities. Additionally, ASHA has developed tools to address these areas and encourages members to use them to advocate for themselves and the profession.

On behalf of members, ASHA has been—and continues to be—engaged in ongoing initiatives that require time and rely on the partnership and grassroots efforts of members to protect the integrity and future of the professions. Figure 1 provides a

visual schematic of how ASHA and its members can collaborate to enhance the timeliness and outcomes of both the policy priorities outlined in the Public Policy Agenda and case-specific advocacy needs.

Based on input received from ASHA members, three primary focus areas have been identified for 2025–2026 that encapsulate the pressing and relevant challenges of the professions: (1) Payment and Coverage Priorities, (2) Service Delivery and Access Priorities; and (3) Workforce Priorities.

The Government Affairs and Public Policy Board appreciates the valuable input provided by ASHA members to help guide the development of the 2025–2026 Public Policy Agenda. We look forward to continued partnership and advocacy in support of these priorities. We also extend our thanks to ASHA staff for their work in balancing important member concerns, identifying ongoing initiatives to address them, and monitoring federal and state public policy changes that may impact the professions. Doing so has helped us reduce redundancy while maintaining an urgent, relevant, and strategic Public Policy Agenda.

Sincerely,

**Government Affairs and
Public Policy Board**

ASHA Member Comments



"I would love for ASHA to follow through with an interstate license; especially, since telepractice use has risen since COVID. It will also allow people in remote areas access to services they normally cannot access."

"Efforts to make services more accessible are crucial for ensuring that everyone receives the care they need."

"All services, both assessment and treatment, that are within an audiologist's scope of practice should be covered by all payers."

"ASHA should continuously engage with public and private payers to advocate for policies that support our services."

Payment and Coverage Priorities

The 2025-2026 Public Policy Agenda acknowledges ASHA's ongoing work with government payers (Medicare, Medicaid, Tricare) and private insurers, and the Association's efforts to develop useful tools and resources that help members understand and navigate case-level nuances of billing, coding, and payer/practice management challenges. Beyond the ongoing work, and in partnership with members, ASHA will continually engage in efforts with state- and federal-level legislators, regulators, payers, and agencies to:

- **Protect and Improve Payment:** By engaging in grassroots and organized advocacy efforts, ASHA and its members will work to inform stakeholders of the valued role of the professions. We will strive to protect and improve payment for audiology and speech-language pathology services and stop unsustainable cuts that inhibit members' ability to provide quality and timely services.
- **Advance Efforts to Secure Comprehensive Coverage:** By continually emphasizing the importance of—and economic and societal outcomes for—services rendered by the professions,

ASHA and its members will work with stakeholders to preserve and expand payer coverage for audiology and speech-language pathology services.

- **Expand and Permanently Cover Telehealth Services:** By showcasing the benefits of incorporating telehealth as a service delivery option for the professions, ASHA and its members will support payment parity policies and policies that explicitly incorporate the full audiology and speech-language pathology scope of practice into telehealth service delivery across settings.
- **Assess and Advise on Value-Based Care:** ASHA and its members will actively seek meaningful opportunities to collaborate with legislators, regulators, and payers to ensure that the health care system's transition to value-based care (VBC) payment models—which reward providers for the *value of care* (quality and cost) instead of the *volume of services provided*—protects ASHA members and recognizes the value of our services while enhancing the outcomes for those we serve.

Service Delivery and Access Priorities

ASHA responds to member concerns regarding challenges affecting service delivery through monitoring and responding to legislative and regulatory changes that can impact licensing requirements and/or the scope of practice for the professions. In partnership with its members, ASHA will:

- **Support Anti-Discriminatory Policies:** Communication is a basic human right. ASHA and its members will protect policies that enhance the clinician's ability to provide services to all—regardless of age; citizenship; disability; ethnicity; gender, gender expression, gender identity, and genetic information; national origin, including culture, language, dialect, and accent; neurodiversity; race; religion; sex, sexual orientation; socioeconomic status; and/or veteran status.
- **Support Early Identification and Intervention Initiatives:** It is important to promote the value of early intervention services with state and federal programs (e.g., Early Hearing Detection and Intervention) and with agencies that are crucial to the equitable, timely, and accurate assessment of—and intervention for—communication and hearing disorders. ASHA and its members will support initiatives that increase access to early identification and intervention services.

- **Secure the Interoperability of Licensure Standards:** Our services are valuable, and the needs of our clients/patients/students are growing at a rapid rate. The result is severely overburdened members—and underserved individuals and communities. Licensure standards are designed to protect consumers from harm by ensuring that only those with the appropriate qualifications and training can provide audiology and speech-language pathology services. ASHA and its members will (a) remind and affirm to key stakeholders the value and authority of licensure standards across all service delivery methods (including telehealth), (b) uphold the education and training standards for the professions, and (c) operationalize the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact to ensure expansion and access to care.

Workforce Priorities

The 2025-2026 *Public Policy Agenda* prioritizes workforce improvements that will address the challenges that (a) detract from members' ability to provide services effectively and efficiently and (b) negatively impact their health and well-being. These improvements include long-term, partnered (ASHA and membership) initiatives targeting inadequate pay, high workloads, unrealistic productivity standards, and unsafe workplaces. In collaboration with members, ASHA will:

- **Grow, Diversify, and Retain Providers:** By promoting policies that incentivize entry into the professions, and facilitate safe and effective service delivery, ASHA and its members will showcase the value of the profession's services, recruit and train diverse clinicians and scientists, and secure the continuation of timely and quality services for those we serve.
- **Support Salary Supplement Initiatives:** By continually monitoring and engaging with state-level associations and lawmakers, ASHA and its members will (a) affirm the rigorous standards to which school-based clinicians are held that contribute to full student participation in school and (b) advocate for pay that is commensurate with our high-level education, experience, knowledge, and training as well as the additional services that we provide (e.g., Medicaid billing).

- **Monitor and Engage on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):** ASHA will (a) monitor the growth and use of AI—by clinicians, payers, and decision makers—and (b) provide targeted engagement with state and federal legislators, regulators, and payers. In doing so, we will ensure that our interests are represented in critical decisions and discussions that could impact ASHA members and the individuals we serve.
- **Champion Solutions to Problems Facing School-Based Members:** ASHA understands the challenges that members who work in school settings need help overcoming—unmanageable caseloads, insufficient resources, and unrealistic workload expectations—and we will fight for policies that enhance and support the capacity of educational audiologists and school-based SLPs to provide timely and comprehensive services to students with communication disorders.



Figure 1. ASHA and Member Actions

Member Needs and Challenges

This figure depicts the ways in which ASHA and its members can work collaboratively to address the needs and challenges outlined in this public policy agenda.

ASHA Actions

Organize state and federal legislative and regulatory advocacy

- Facilitate letter-writing campaigns and petitions
- Meet with lawmakers
- Meet with regulatory agencies



Collaborate with state associations

- Provide organizational and advocacy support
- Provide advocacy grants to support state efforts



Network with other stakeholders

- Team up with other organizations such as Academy of Doctors of Audiology, American Academy of Audiology, American Physical Therapy Association, American Occupational Therapy Association
- Represent ASHA—and its members—in various coalitions such as the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities, Early Childhood Personnel Center, Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus, National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, Professional Certification Coalition



Member Actions

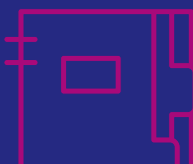
Engage in grassroots state and federal advocacy

- Meet with lawmakers and attend briefings
- Invite elected officials to visit your place of work
- Visit ASHA's Take Action site to send prewritten letters to your elected officials and sign petitions (when applicable) on issues impacting the professions and those we serve



Organize municipal/district regulatory advocacy

- Meet with local school board or other organizational leaders
- Spread awareness within your community



Get involved with ASHA

- Utilize resources and tools
- Volunteer on a board, committee, or council
- Learn about ASHA-PAC



Who We Are...

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for over 241,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students—as described below.

Audiologists

specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids.

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs)

specialize in the assessment of—and treatment for—speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communications disorders.

Speech, language, and hearing scientists are professionals who investigate the biological, physical, and psychological processes of communication and who develop evidence-based methods for diagnosing and treating individuals with speech, language, and hearing problems.

Audiologists and SLPs provide services to people of all ages; these services maximize health and functional outcomes for chronic and acute conditions. They work in a variety of settings including health care facilities (e.g., inpatient, outpatient, private practice), schools, and universities. The increase of regulatory and legislative support ensures adequate professional training, fair compensation, and access to services, all of which can avoid long-term negative impacts on government spending, job retention/loss, and the ability of clients/patients/students to contribute to society.

Audiology assistants and **speech-language pathology assistants** are individuals who, after appropriate education and training, perform delegated tasks that are prescribed, directed, and supervised by a certified and/or licensed audiologist or a certified and/or licensed SLP.

Students are members through the **National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA)**, which is the ASHA recognized national student organization for pre-professionals studying communication sciences and disorders.

Learn More

Take action on ASHA's advocacy issues: takeaction.asha.org

Learn more about how **ASHA-PAC** helps amplify your voice: asha.org/advocacy/pac

Stay informed and engaged on **ASHA's advocacy** work: asha.org/advocacy/

Sign up for ASHA Headlines to receive the **ASHA Advocate**: asha.org/publications/enews/headlines

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