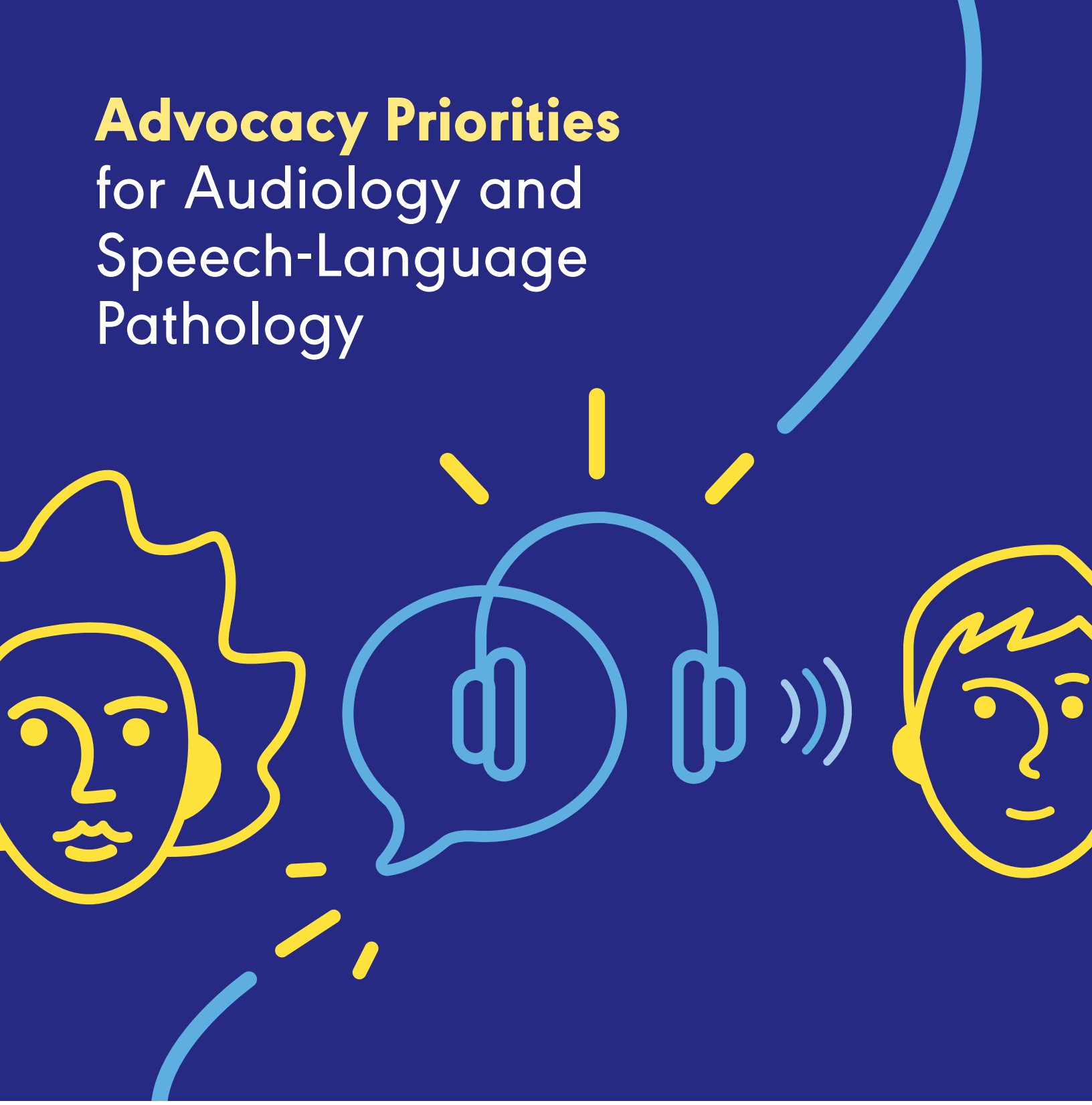
Advocacy Priorities for Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology



ASHA
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

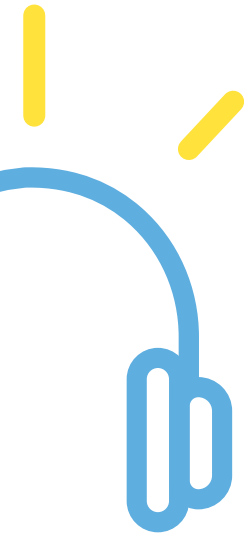
Public Policy Agenda

2027-2028

Who We Are...

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for nearly 250,000 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 and SLPs serve people of all ages across a range of settings, including health care, education, and the community. Public policies that support appropriate professional preparation, fair payment, and access to services help strengthen the workforce, improve health and functional outcomes, and ensure that people can receive the services they need.



Audiologists

are allied health care professionals who provide patient-centered care in the prevention, identification, diagnosis, and evidence-based treatment of hearing, balance, and other auditory disorders. They require a doctoral degree to practice and, with appropriate licensing, can provide services in schools, inpatient hospitals, private practice settings, military/VA clinics, and outpatient clinics.



Speech-language pathologists (SLPs)

are allied health care providers specializing in the assessment of—and treatment for—speech, language, feeding/swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders. To practice, an SLP must have a master's degree. With appropriate licensing, they can provide services in schools, inpatient hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, private practice settings, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, and home health care settings.

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.

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.

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

Dear Fellow ASHA Members,

Effective advocacy begins with listening. Through surveys, written feedback, conversations with volunteer leaders, and ongoing engagement with ASHA staff, members shared the opportunities and challenges shaping our professions. Your experiences and expertise guided the Government Affairs and Public Policy (GAPP) Board in developing ASHA's 2027–2028 Public Policy Agenda.

The Public Policy Agenda provides a roadmap for ASHA's advocacy efforts and focuses our collective work on the policy issues where we can make a meaningful impact over the next two years. It addresses broad federal and state policy issues affecting the professions nationwide while recognizing that many member concerns also arise from local, employer, or practice-setting circumstances. ASHA will continue to support members in addressing those challenges through policy resources, advocacy tools, and professional consultations.

Progress depends on partnership. ASHA's advocacy is strongest when members share our experiences, engage policymakers, and participate in grassroots advocacy.

For the 2027–2028 cycle, the Public Policy Agenda is organized around three interconnected areas:

- Payment and Coverage;
- Service Delivery and Access to Care; and
- Workforce and Training.

Together, these priorities focus our advocacy on improving access to services, strengthening the professions, and better supporting ASHA members in delivering high-quality care.

The GAPP Board thanks the members whose feedback informed this agenda and the ASHA staff whose expertise and ongoing advocacy help turn these priorities into action. We look forward to working alongside members across the country to advance the professions and improve outcomes for the people we serve.

We invite you to join us in action.

With appreciation,
Your 2026 Government Affairs and Public Policy Board

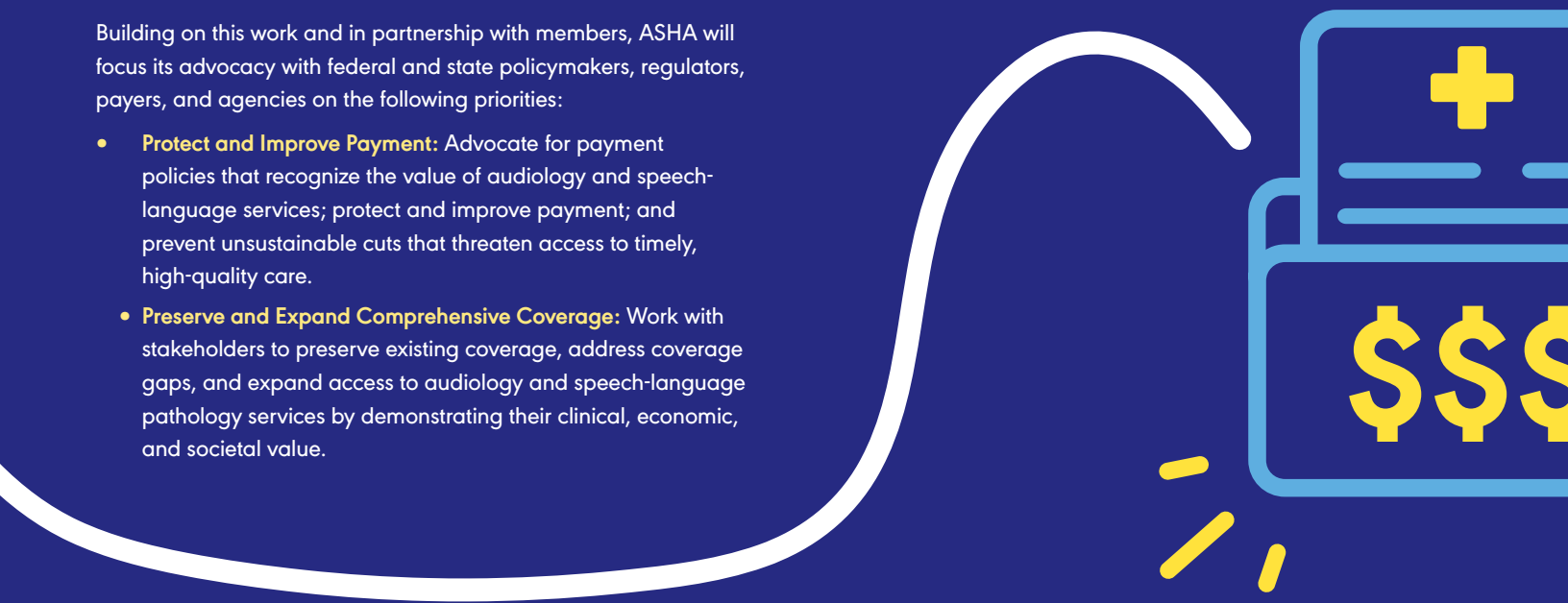


Payment and Coverage Priorities

The 2027–2028 Public Policy Agenda prioritizes policies that support appropriate payment and comprehensive coverage for audiology and speech-language pathology services. ASHA's ongoing work includes advocating with government payers—including Medicare, Medicaid, and TRICARE—private insurers, and managed care organizations, as well as providing resources and support to help members navigate billing, coding, coverage, and payer-related challenges.

Building on this work and in partnership with members, ASHA will focus its advocacy with federal and state policymakers, regulators, payers, and agencies on the following priorities:

- **Protect and Improve Payment:** Advocate for payment policies that recognize the value of audiology and speech-language services; protect and improve payment; and prevent unsustainable cuts that threaten access to timely, high-quality care.
- **Preserve and Expand Comprehensive Coverage:** Work with stakeholders to preserve existing coverage, address coverage gaps, and expand access to audiology and speech-language pathology services by demonstrating their clinical, economic, and societal value.
- **Modernize Payment and Coverage:** Advocate for payment and coverage policies that keep pace with advances in clinical practice, technology, and service delivery; reflect the full scopes of practice of audiology and speech-language pathology; and support permanent coverage of telehealth services across settings.
- **Shape Value-Based Care Policies:** Advocate for value-based care policies, systems, and payment models that appropriately recognize audiology and speech-language pathology services; protect access to care; and meaningfully reflect quality and patient outcomes.



Service Delivery and Access to Care Priorities

The 2027–2028 Public Policy Agenda prioritizes policies that improve access to high-quality audiology and speech-language pathology services and support effective service delivery across settings. ASHA's ongoing work includes addressing member concerns and challenges, as well as monitoring and responding to legislative, regulatory, and other policy developments involving licensure, scopes of practice, access to care, and service delivery.

Building on this work and in partnership with members, ASHA will focus its 2027–2028 advocacy on the following priorities:

- **Support Communication as a Basic Human Right:** Advocate for policies that support equitable access to person-centered, evidence-based services and allow clinicians to provide care in the most appropriate settings to all individuals—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.

Service Delivery and Access to Care Priorities Cont.

- **Support Early Identification and Intervention:** Support policies and programs that promote early identification of communication disorders and hearing loss from birth through early childhood and connect children and their families to timely, appropriate assessment and intervention—particularly during critical periods of development.
- **Promote Identification and Intervention Across the Lifespan:** Promote timely and equitable access to screening, identification, assessment, and intervention for people of all ages—children to seniors—who are at risk of or experiencing communication, swallowing, hearing, or balance disorders.
- **Protect Professional Standards and Promote Workforce Mobility:** Advocate for policies that protect the integrity of the professions by upholding appropriate education, training, and licensure standards that safeguard the public and promote high-quality services. ASHA will work to preserve the full scopes of practice of the professions across service delivery settings, support the implementation of the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact, and advance policies that improve workforce mobility and timely access to care.
- **Reduce Barriers to Accessing Services:** Advocate for policies that reduce geographic, financial, technological, and administrative barriers to audiology and speech-language pathology services and support innovative service delivery models, including telepractice when clinically appropriate.



Workforce and Training Priorities

The 2027–2028 Public Policy Agenda prioritizes policies that strengthen the communication sciences and disorders workforce across the professional continuum—from recruitment into graduate education—through academic preparation, research, clinical training, employment, and long-term retention. These priorities promote high-quality education and clinical training, effective and efficient service delivery, workforce well-being, and the academic and research infrastructure needed to prepare future professionals and sustain the professions.

Building on this work and in partnership with members, ASHA will focus its 2027–2028 advocacy on the following priorities:

- **Grow, Diversify, and Sustain the Workforce:** Advocate for policies that address audiology and speech-language pathology personnel shortages and support recruitment into the professions; expand educational and clinical training opportunities; reduce financial barriers to graduate education; and support the preparation and retention of a diverse, highly qualified workforce. ASHA will also advocate for continued access to student loans and other financial pathways that help individuals enter the professions.
- **Advance School-Based Services:** Advocate for policies that strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the school-based audiology and speech-language pathology workforce and improve students' access to timely, comprehensive services. Priorities include adequate funding, appropriate staffing and workload policies, workforce recruitment and retention, reduced administrative burdens, and appropriate reimbursement for school-based services.
- **Strengthen Higher Education and Research:** Advocate for robust federal investment in communication sciences and disorders research, research training, and career development to advance the evidence base for the professions; support innovation in service delivery; and build the pipeline of future researchers, clinician scientists, and clinicians. ASHA will also support higher education policies that strengthen the academic and research workforce and promote high-quality professional education and preparation.
- **Shape Policies for the Responsible Use of Technology:** Advocate for policies that support the responsible and evidence-based use of artificial intelligence across education, clinical practice, research, payment, and service delivery. ASHA will work with policymakers, payers, employers, and other stakeholders to ensure that emerging technologies support—rather than replace—professional judgment, protect quality of care, and serve the interests of members and the people they serve.

Government Affairs and Public Policy Board

ASHA volunteer members who served on the Government Affairs and Public Policy Board during 2026 developed the 2027–2028 Public Policy Agenda. These dedicated leaders bring diverse experiences and a shared commitment to advancing the professions and improving outcomes for the people we serve

The GAPP Board's Role in Developing the Agenda



Listen

Bring member needs, experiences, and perspective into the development of ASHA's advocacy priorities.

Prioritize

Identify federal and state public policy issues where focused advocacy can make a meaningful impact.

Partner

Work with ASHA members, volunteer leaders, state associations, and staff to advance the Public Policy Agenda.



Top row [L-R]: Kellie Ellis, Farrah Rizwi, Sarah Jones, Bill Benson, Bethany Whidden, Louis Malerba
Bottom row [L-R]: Meghan Ahern, Lisa Guerette, Gabrielle Howard, Sandra Reams, Collin Sexton, Sinetra Bowdry

2026 GAPP Board Members

Bill Benson, Public Member

Sinetra Bowdry, Member

Kellie Ellis, Member

Lisa Guerette, Chair

Michelle Hostler, Ex Officio

Gabrielle Howard, Early Career Professional

Sarah Jones, Member

Louis Malerba, ASHA's Vice President, Government Affairs and Public Policy

Sandra Reams, Member

Farrah Rizwi, ASHA-PAC Board Chair

Meghan Ahern, Member

Collin Sexton, NSSLHA's Vice President, Government Affairs and Public Policy

Bethany Whidden, Member

Learn more about the GAPP Board at
asha.org/gapp-board

Sign up to receive the *ASHA Advocate* e-newsletter:
asha.org/publications/enews/headlines

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

Connect with your state association:
asha.org/advocacy/state/state-association-member-benefits

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

Take action on key issues:
asha.org/advocacy/takeaction

Your Voice Makes an Impact

Get Involved. Take Action. Stay Connected.

ASHA
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

1416950