



May 7, 2020

Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, M.D., M.P.H.
Surgeon General
Office of the Surgeon General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Humphrey Bldg., Suite 701H
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Adams:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to thank you for your call to action to expand the use of telehealth during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students.

As the association that represents both audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs), ASHA strongly agrees with you about the importance of providers utilizing telehealth to ensure that individuals with communication disorders continue to obtain the services they require during the pandemic. Since the pandemic began and stay-at-home orders have been issued, an increasing number of audiologists and SLPs have been furnishing medically necessary services within their scope of practice via telehealth when clinically appropriate for the patient. In fact, Medicaid, TRICARE, and commercial insurance have expanded access to telehealth services for more than 100 million Americans requiring audiology and speech-language pathology services. Thirty-three states have in place permanent laws allowing audiologists and SLPs to perform services via telehealth. In addition, 26 states have put into place emergency temporary laws for the provision of telehealth as a specific response to COVID-19.¹ Your leadership will help ensure that these gains are maintained and expanded over the course of the pandemic and beyond.

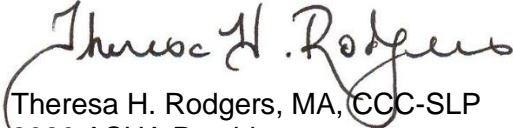
ASHA is pleased that many of our members have chosen to join the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) and serve under your command. Just last fall, ASHA's blog featured an entry by Lt. Courtney Wood promoting the PHS Corps as a wonderful way to serve our country.²

As organizations and citizens work to meet the responsibilities and needs of daily life while minimizing the spread of COVID-19, each stakeholder must do what they can to help reduce the risk of exposure. ASHA would be pleased to partner with you and others at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote the expansion of telehealth services.

ASHA Comments
May 7, 2020
Page 2

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Brian Altman, ASHA's director of federal and political affairs at, baltman@asha.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa H. Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Theresa H. Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP
2020 ASHA President

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2020). *COVID-19: Tracking of State Laws and Regulations for Telepractice and Temporary Practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/State-Telepractice-Policy-COVID-Tracking.pdf>.

² Wood, C. (2019, October 8). *Have You Considered Serving as an Audiologist or SLP in Uniform?*[Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/have-you-considered-serving-as-an-audiologist-or-slp-in-uniform/full/>.