Background

The Certification Board of Music Therapy’s (CBMT) domains allow for the assessment of a client’s communicative functional level, strengths, and areas of need. It also allows for the treatment of development of speech through music therapy. The American Music Therapy Association promotes the use of Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) codes, which were developed for use by speech-language pathologists (SLPs), to bill music therapy services.

ASHA’s Perspective

ASHA opposes licensure for music therapists (MTs) due to their infringement on the Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology and the use of billing codes designed for speech and language assessment and treatment. (See www.asha.org/policy/SP2016-00343/)

ASHA believes that the MT’s scope of practice is too broad. CBMT states that MTs can assess social, sensory, emotional, physical, cognitive, spiritual, and communication abilities. We believe that a profession’s scope of practice is limited to specific competencies acquired through education, training, and practical experience.

Unlike SLPs, MTs are not subject to the same rigorous qualification standards and do not acquire the skills necessary to assess and treat communication disorders in their prescribed program of study and subsequent clinical training. ASHA opposes licensure for MTs and will continue to advocate with state association leaders, members and state legislators and/or regulators to protect our scope of practice.

Decision Makers

ASHA is urging state legislators and/or regulators to reject licensure of MTs. We recommend that MTs amend their scope of practice to eliminate assessment of communication disorders and to treat communication disorders only after a client’s communication needs and abilities have been assessed by an SLP and a treatment plan developed. Further, we recommend that MTs refrain from using CPT billing codes, including speech assessment and treatment, for which they are not adequately trained.

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