



# MEDICAID ADVOCACY IN PENNSYLVANIA: A STATE AND FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP



**ASHA CE  
APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania  
Speech-Language-Hearing  
Association  
Intermediate Level  
.1 ASHA CEUs

**CAROLINE BERGNER JD AND  
NICOLE LYNN BILLAK ED.D., CCC-SLP/L, LBS**

## **Learning Objectives:**

- Describe the historical development of Medicaid and explain how reimbursement rates are determined at the state and federal levels.
- Identify the key advocacy steps taken by the Pennsylvania Tri Alliance to influence Medicaid policy and reimbursement changes.
- Apply strategies from a negotiation toolkit to develop a plan for advocating for improved reimbursement rates within one's own practice or organization.



## Course Abstract

This session provides an inside look at how speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists collaborate through Pennsylvania's Tri Alliance to advance Medicaid advocacy. Participants will gain an understanding of Medicaid's historical foundations, reimbursement structures, and the coordinated steps taken by the Tri Alliance to influence policy change. The presentation will also review pending state and federal legislation impacting service delivery and conclude with a practical negotiation toolkit designed to help clinicians and practices advocate for improved reimbursement rates.

## **Speaker Bios**

Caroline Bergner, JD, is director of health care policy for Medicaid at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. She answers ASHA member questions, tracks Medicaid policies and advocates with state Medicaid agencies, managed care companies, Congress, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). She also works with ASHA's Committee on Medicaid and the State Advocates for Reimbursement (STAR) Network. She is a licensed attorney and has worked in health policy for more than 15 years.

Dr. Nicole Billak is serving as the current president of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association. She has 20 years of experience as a school-based speech language pathologist in Mercer County, PA. Dr. Billak obtained her Master's Degree from Duquesne University and her Doctorate from Slippery Rock University. She is also a licensed behavior specialist and has a certificate in special education supervision. She has also worked as an adjunct professor specializing in childhood language disorders, autism, and behavior. Dr. Billak resides with her family in Mercer County with her son, who has special needs, and husband.

## **Speaker Disclosures**

Caroline is a full-time salaried employee of ASHA. She serves as a liaison to PSHA's STAR representative and participates on the Pennsylvania Tri Alliance.

Dr. Billak does not have any relevant financial disclosures. She is the current president of PSHA.