

Keystater

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Message From the President – Dana Bitetti



Hello PSHA Members!
Happy fall! I am honored to serve as president this year. In just the few months since my official transition to

president, so much has happened within the organization.

First and foremost, I want to thank you all for your membership! We value our members and their participation in the events and activities of the association. Your membership directly supports our advocacy efforts and our efforts to bring you high-quality continuing education. We also value your questions and input! Have an idea for how we can serve you better? We are listening! Have a question related to clinical practice in Pennsylvania? Let us know! While we don't have all the answers, we will always try to connect you with the right resources.

I am now excited to update you on some of our key projects and upcoming events.

Changes to our Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan

The PSHA leadership had the opportunity to work with ASHA on updating our mission statement vision and strategic plan following the annual convention in the spring.

The mission and vision are currently available on our website, but I have also provided them here because I believe they should be at the forefront of all our efforts:

Mission: *Our mission is to empower our current and future professionals and those they serve through education, advocacy and inclusion to promote clinical excellence.*

Vision: *Enhancing quality of life and the human right to communicate across the Commonwealth.*

Over the next few weeks, PSHA leadership will solidify a new five-year strategic plan aimed at sustaining the organization so that

we can continue our mission and vision.

Streamlined Process for Tracking Legislation

As I write this, PSHA is tracking close to 20 bills and regulations that could impact clinical practice and individuals with communication disorders. Our vice president for governmental relations, Tamara Sepe created a “one stop” shared document where we can more efficiently track board and committee input and actions taken. Using the new process, we ensure the relevant PSHA committees (i.e., Schools, Telepractice/Healthcare, DEIA, Government Relations) have a chance to weigh in. We will share more about our new process and the bills we are tracking at our Virtual Fall Workshop: *Professional Issues in Pennsylvania: DEI, Ethics, Supervision and More.*

Virtual Fall Workshop

Speaking of the Fall Workshop, we have created a committee-driven workshop to provide you with all the necessary required continuing education. I must give a big thank you to our committee chairs and to the committee members who volunteered their time to create each presentation (Lisa Bedore, Nicole Billak, Erin M. Buckwalter, Nancy Carlino, Anne Gilbertson, Monica Kaniamattam, Pamela A. Smith and Joanne Mizii Wisely). If you missed the live event on October 18 and 19, you can visit the PSHA website to register to watch the recordings.

Louise Keegan, past president, and I also delivered a Town Hall as part of the event. This has been recorded as well. During the Town Hall we provided an overview of PSHA's current advocacy efforts and opportunities to get involved. It is also a great way to learn about each committees' goals. There was opportunities to ask questions and discuss concerns, so again, feel free to register to view the Town Hall recording.

Monthly Advocacy Updates

As president, I am committed to providing timely information on how PSHA is serving you. Each month on social media and in our PSHA *InBrief*, we will highlight three to four key updates. Following our social media and *InBrief* is a great way to stay on top of other PSHA news and events. Our website will also be undergoing updates where members can find out more about each bill or regulation we are tracking. Thank you to Reethee Antony, Jordan Brewer, Monica Kaniamattam and Brittany Marcolini for helping me keep our members updated!

PSHA Leadership Development Program (LDP)

Last year's inaugural LDP was a success! I enjoyed the camaraderie we built as participants and enjoyed meeting many participants in person at the annual convention. This year's LDP is again open to PSHA members, including clinicians, researchers and students. New this year, LDP participants will be involved in a culminating project for PLAN (PSHA Leadership and Advocacy Network). We hope you will join us!

We were able to sponsor the cost of participation for every student member of PSHA who participated last year thanks to the generous donations of the PSHA Executive Board and the LDP Steering Committee.

Please contact PSHA if you are interested in sponsoring one of the next generation of leaders in Pennsylvania!

Spring Convention

Preparation for our spring 2024 Convention in Pittsburgh is underway! I am excited for our unique theme this year ***Creating a Vibrant Profession***. Mary Weidner, vice president for convention planning and program and the Convention Committee along with our business office have been working to plan another

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President's Message

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high-quality event. Stay tuned for more information about featured speakers, Convention social events, the exciting student track and new early career track. We also love to see the submissions from our members working in all settings across Pennsylvania.

Again, thank you for your continued support of PSHA. As state associations face many financial challenges, I am grateful for so many who recognize the value of what we do.

Dana Bitetti

Dana Bitetti, PhD, CCC-SLP
President

PENNSYLVANIA SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION

Keystater

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of articles, manuscripts, reports and letters to the editor are encouraged. The **Keystater** also welcomes suggestions of editorial coverage. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity.

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www.psha.org

Keep Your Information Up-To-Date!

Log on to the Member Center at www.psha.org, enter your Last Name and your Member Number.

You can then edit your account information, renew your membership, register for an event, search for a member and read the **Keystater**.

Government Relations Updates

Through the continued communication and support of the McNees-Winter Group, PSHA receives weekly updates on health care and education policy and legislation in Pennsylvania.

Here are a few highlights for the fall of 2023:

- Governor Shapiro signed the main budget bill into law. Distribution of funds is somewhat limited until all code bills have passed.
- Democrats have a one seat majority in the House of Representatives following the September 26 election of Lindsay Powell to fill Sara Innamorato's seat.
- The Pennsylvania House of Representatives and the Senate have resumed sessions with a number of proposed bills relevant to our practice.

The budget includes many items relevant to the population we serve. Here are a few highlights:

- Invests an additional \$567.37 million, or 7.8 percent, in education funding through the Basic Education Funding Formula.
- Proposes an increase of \$103.8 million, or 7.8 percent, to special education programs, supports and services throughout Pennsylvania's school districts.

- Invests an additional \$10.4 million into preschool early intervention services to better support children with developmental or social-emotional service needs.
- Commits to creating healthy learning environments for all Pennsylvania students by investing \$100 million in matching grants for schools to make environmental repairs and improvements.
- Proposes a more than \$60 million increase in funding for higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to increase postsecondary access and completion.
- Increases funding by \$1.48 million for individuals with disabilities to remain active in their own communities by bolstering the nine-state Centers for Independent Living and providing additional resources to acquire and be trained in the use of assistive technology devices.
- Designates \$700,000 for specialized intellectual and developmental disability telemedicine by adding a home and community-based service waiver designated for individuals with ID/A to enable real-time support, consultation and coordination on health issues.

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Governmental Relations

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- Dedicates more than \$1.9 million to long-term care facilities to ensure compliance and mitigate risks while supporting the implementation of Act 128 of 2022, and the skilled nursing facility regulations.
- Addresses food insecurity among seniors and people living with disabilities by increasing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit from \$23 per month to \$35 per month with a state investment of \$16 million.

Below is a summary of legislation and policy items that PSHA and the McNees-Winter Group are monitoring or actively working on:

Actively working on:

- **HB 1609/HR181:** Insurance Coverage of Hearing Aids - PSHA wrote a letter of support to Representative Hanbidge and requested language to ensure access to services from an audiologist be added to this bill.
- **HR 155:** Aphasia Awareness Month - PSHA wrote a letter thanking legislators for this resolution designating June 2023 as Aphasia Awareness Month in the Commonwealth.
- **Amendment of Title 75:** Protection for Drivers with Autism - Two bills have been introduced creating driver's license designations for individuals with communication disorders. PSHA leadership plans to meet with legislators to discuss language changes to include our professions as able to document eligibility for these designations.
- **HB 1235:** Authorizing Pennsylvania to Join the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

Interstate Compact – PSHA wrote a letter supporting this bill.

- **HB 1067:** Educator Certification and Employment for Immigrants in Pennsylvania – Eliminates barriers to educator certification and employment for those who are immigrants in Pennsylvania. PSHA wrote a letter of support for the Senate version of this bill and will continue to support it.
- **HB 1356:** Music Therapy Licensing – PSHA worked with ASHA and legislators to add language to this bill that prevents encroachment and ensures collaboration as music therapists pursue state certification.
- **HB 342:** Improving College Transition for Students with Disabilities – PSHA wrote a letter in support of this bill.
- **HB 19:** Professional Licensing for Behavior Analysts – PSHA worked closely with the Behavior Analyst organization last session to include clarifying language in the bill. PSHA is neutral on the legislation.
- **Regulation #16A-6808:** Licensure by Endorsement – The proposed regulation intends to simplify credentialing for professionals moving to Pennsylvania. PSHA submitted public comments requesting clarification for the interview process for international professionals.

Monitoring:

- **HB 998:** Literacy Achievement for All Pennsylvanians – A proposed literacy initiative with provisions for universal screening and implementation of evidence-based reading programs.
- **SB 300:** Student Teacher Stipend Program – This would create a new Educator Pipeline Program

within the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) to provide stipends for individuals enrolled in a teacher preparation program in Pennsylvania.

- **SB 739:** Telemedicine – Proposes definitions and guidelines surrounding telemedicine practice in Pennsylvania.
- **SB 843:** Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact – This would increase teacher mobility by simplifying certification processes for professionals from participating states.
- **HB 1512:** Ensuring Telemedicine Access for Pennsylvanians – Proposes to require insurance companies to reimburse for telemedicine.
- **Commonwealth Essential Health Benefits Benchmark Plan** – Considers updating the Commonwealth's essential health benefits (EHB) benchmark plan, which establishes the minimum essential health benefits, including rehabilitation services, that individual and small group health insurance plans must offer. PSHA submitted a letter of support to the Department of Insurance on August 31, 2023.

Thank you to the McNees-Winter Group and the members of PSHA for your ongoing support and advocacy.

Tamara Sepe

Tamara Sepe, MS, CCC-SLP
Vice President for Governmental Relations

Erin Buckwalter

Erin Buckwalter, MS, CCC-SLP
Vice President for Governmental Relations

Angie J.M. Armbrust

Angie J.M. Armbrust, MPA
Senior Associate, McNees-Winter Group, LLC

2024 PSHA Convention – Pittsburgh April 10-13



CREATING A VIBRANT PROFESSION

PITTSBURGH 2024

The 2024 PSHA Convention returns to Pittsburgh from April 10-13! This year's theme, *Creating a Vibrant Profession*, gives a nod to Pittsburgh native, Andy Warhol, whose art pushed the boundaries of convention. Just as Warhol did, attendees can expect to be challenged to think in new ways and inspired by creative and bold ideas.

The Convention Planning Committee is excited to offer a fresh spin on the program to enhance attendees' learning and engagement. Below are some of the changes that you will see this year:

- **Masterclass Sessions:** We will offer a series of advanced-level Masterclass sessions for the pediatric, adult and multi-interest tracks.
- **Pediatric:** Sessions on School Eligibility and Speech Sound Disorders (Dr. Lissa Power-deFur)
- **Adult:** Dysphagia Management (Dr. James Coyle and Dr. Kendrea Garand)
- **Multi-Interest:** Brain Injury (Don MacLennan)
- **Committee Endorsed Sessions:** These featured sessions will highlight the work of our amazing PSHA committees. Sessions will feature topics on school-based issues, supervision, health care issues, DEIA and more!
- **Early Career Track:** We are thrilled to introduce special programming for early career clinicians (i.e., CFs through three years of clinical experience). These sessions will address some of the challenges and stressors of being a novice practitioner such as: contract negotiations, finding the right fit, setting boundaries, burnout and more!
- **Scheduling:** Sessions will be 1.5-hour, 30-minute technical session or poster. The option for one-hour sessions has been eliminated this year to minimize session overlap and maximize room space. We will make a concerted effort to diversify topics for simultaneous sessions and to minimize track overlap during the Masterclass sessions.

The Convention will continue to offer a student track, raffles, VIP drawing and of course, a lot of learning and community building!

A sincere thank you to the Convention Planning Committee and PSHA Office for helping to plan what will undoubtedly be a bold and vibrant Convention. We can't wait to see you at the newly renovated Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square in April! You don't want to miss it!

For additional Convention details visit: www.psha.org.

Mary Weidner

Mary Weidner, PhD, CCC-SLP
Vice President for Convention Planning and Program

Better Hearing and Speech Month Slogan Contest

It is that time again—time to start thinking about Better Hearing and Speech Month (BHSM) for 2024. PSHA sponsors a coloring, drawing and essay contest for school-age students across the Commonwealth. Students may share entries with their speech-language pathologist or audiologist to submit to PSHA. The top entries in each category win prizes. The contest is slogan-oriented, and we ask that PSHA members submit ideas for the BHSM slogan. It is

suggested that the Convention and BHSM are similar or connected.

The theme for the 2024 Convention is *Creating a Vibrant Profession*. The associated logo features a Warhol-inspired design.

Here are some of the award-winning slogans from previous years to get you thinking:

- *Light the Path Toward Better Hearing and Speech* (2023)
- *The Re-Connect Effect* (2022)
- *Blast Off to Better Speech, Language and Hearing* (2021)

Send your slogan ideas to psa@psa.org. The slogan contest winner receives a complimentary registration to the 2024 PSHA Convention.

Thanks in advance to those creative minds out there!

Reethee Antony

Reethee Antony, PhD, CCC-SLP
Vice President for Public Information and Professional Communication

Join PSHA: Contribute to the Advancement of our Profession

Fall classes and school sessions are now back on track for speech-language pathologists in the educational settings where they, along with those from other sectors, are reporting steadily growing demands within the field resulting from staff shortages, expanding caseloads, diverse client needs and ever-changing billing complexities. In fact, a review of recent viral tweets and trending reels will outline similar reports of SLPs being tasked to accomplish more with diminishing resources in increasingly complicated situations. However, digging into the comments, you'll also recognize a crowd of colleagues replying back to share potential connections and possible solutions with a rally of responses and encouragement. Those are the empowering voices of SLPs from across Pennsylvania.



Although frustration might be noted in some of those conversations and shared accounts on social media, so too are the embers of innovative inspiration sounding back. In following PSHA's online presence, you'll notice scrolling banners and decorated announcements showcasing member spotlights, invitations to join new committee workgroups, several summarized advocacy updates, registration links for upcoming professional development sessions and available leadership networking opportunities—just to name a few. These resources

are all available thanks to the steady team of PSHA volunteers who continue to collaborate across the state and national landscape to expand your Pennsylvania network and advance your professional perspective with governing bodies and regulatory agencies.



We must also continue to strengthen our regional influence by organizing our resources, solidifying connections to professional groups, and engaging allies in collaborative conversations to promote clinical excellence. All of us have upskills that we can offer to assist in promoting the profession, so how might you help?

- ✓ Run for a PSHA Board position to get involved in activities that could potentially change your path of practice as well as the trajectory of our profession
- ✓ Reflect on the priorities that you've established as well as those you find applicable to improving the working conditions of SLPs across Pennsylvania by joining a PSHA committee workgroup
- ✓ Subscribe to weekly notices from the PA General Assembly: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/login/> and share input with your local representatives on how their decisions impact our profession.

- ✓ Spread the word to other colleagues about the importance of joining PSHA and advocating at the state level.
- ✓ Register for the next Town Hall meeting then take an active role in PSHA action planning.
- ✓ Submit a proposal for the upcoming PSHA Convention in Pittsburgh and share your work with others.
- ✓ Recognize a colleague with a PSHA award nomination for one of their brightest accomplishments.
- ✓ Reach out and engage a PSHA representative on how you might contribute

We're hopeful that the work we've accomplished is making a positive impact on your daily practices and look forward to serving with you directly. Being an active participant defines the vibrance that so strongly represents our profession today and will strengthen the pathway for future SLPs into tomorrow. Join with us at PSHA now to invest in each other. It's time to let your leadership shine!

Caron Anthony-Higley

Caron Anthony-Higley, PhD, MEd, MA, CCC-SLP/L
Vice President for Professional Practices: Speech-Language Pathology

Join PSHA Today!

Member Benefits:

- Forum for Professional/Work Issues
- Communication/Information
- Continued Education and Annual Conventions
- Networking
- A Legislative Voice

[Learn More on Becoming a Member](#)

PSHA 2024 Honors and Awards – Nominate Someone Today

Do you have a colleague that you admire? Is there a clinician that you work with that simply amazes you with their clinical skills and how they engage their clients? Here is your opportunity to recognize the accomplishments and dedication of your peers with one of these prestigious awards!

Professional Awards

- Amy S. Goldman Advocacy Award
- PSHA Distinguished Service Award
- Honors of the Association
- PSHA Rising Star Award

Student Awards

- Von Drach Memorial Scholarship
- Chapter Honors

Visit www.psha.org for the award descriptions and nomination details.

Katelyn Dwyer

Katelyn Dwyer, MA, CCC-SLP
Vice President of Professional Preparation and Continuing Education

Nurturing Minds Through Sensory Management in Schools

As we step into another school year, it's crucial to recognize that every child has a unique set of sensory needs. These sensory needs can significantly impact their ability to learn, interact with peers, communicate and navigate the school environment effectively. Occupational therapists (OTs) play a vital role in promoting sensory management strategies in schools. While speech-language pathologists (SLPs) specialize in speech and language development, there exists an essential synergy between our professions when it comes to creating an optimal learning environment for our students. This article will delve into the importance of sensory management in educational settings and offer practical tips for SLPs.

(Please consult with your school-based OT before implementing any of these strategies.)

Understanding Sensory Processing:

Sensory processing is the brain's ability to receive, interpret and respond to sensory information from our surroundings. It involves various senses, such as touch, taste, smell, sight, sound and even our internal senses like balance and body awareness. A well-regulated sensory system is essential for optimal learning and development.

The Eight Sensory Systems:

Did you know that there are actually eight sensory systems? The most common are: sight (visual), taste (gustatory), touch (tactile), hearing (auditory) and smell (olfactory). The other three systems include: vestibular (balance), proprioceptive (movement) and interoceptive (internal).

The vestibular system helps us maintain balance and spatial orientation, the proprioceptive system provides feedback about the position and movement of our body parts and the interoceptive system enables us to perceive and respond to internal bodily sensations and emotions.

Sensory Challenges in Schools:

Many children experience sensory challenges that can hinder their educational experience. Some children may be over sensitive to sensory stimuli, leading to distractibility and discomfort, while others may seek out sensory input

to self-regulate. In the classroom, these challenges can manifest as difficulties with attention, emotional regulation and social interactions.

The Sensory-Speech Connection:

Sensory processing and communication are inherently linked. A well-regulated sensory system provides the foundation for effective communication. Conversely, sensory challenges can impede a child's ability to engage, attend and express themselves verbally. SLPs and OTs recognize this connection to enhance services and support the holistic development of students.

The Role of Occupational Therapy:

Occupational therapy practitioners are uniquely positioned to assess and address sensory needs in schools. Through collaboration with SLPs, educators and caregivers, OTs can create sensory-friendly environments and individualized strategies to support each child's learning journey. Here are some strategies that can make a difference:

1. Sensory-Friendly Classrooms:

The Classroom Environment: reduce clutter, use natural lighting, choose muted colors, place tennis balls on the legs of chairs (reduces noise)

Flexible Seating: Allow students to choose their seating, which can help accommodate different sensory preferences (i.e., standing at the desk, sitting on the carpet or other chairs, such as a bean bag chair or a rocking chair) in the classroom.

Sensory Break Areas: Designate a quiet space for students to take sensory breaks when needed.

Visual Supports: Use visual schedules and cues to provide predictability and structure.

2. Sensory Diet: Develop personalized sensory diets for students to incorporate sensory activities into their daily routines. For example, students who chew non-edible items such as their pencils or the sleeves of their shirts are seeking oral sensory input. A simple, yet discreet sensory tool can be the incorporation of crunchy snacks (pretzels, mini carrots) or a sports water bottle to provide the sensory input that the student is seeking.

3. Educate and Collaborate:

SLPs can collaborate with OTs to identify students who may have sensory processing challenges affecting their communication skills. Regular communication between our professions is crucial in this regard.

Sensory Management Workshops: Ask your school-based OT to conduct a workshop for educators/related service staff to increase awareness of sensory processing and its impact on learning.

Parent-Teacher Communication: Maintain open lines of communication with parents to share strategies and gather insights about each child's sensory needs.

4. Sensory Tools and Resources:

Fidget Tools: Provide fidget tools like stress balls or putty to help students self-regulate.

Sensory Kits: Create sensory kits with sensory-friendly items like noise-canceling headphones or textured objects.

5. Sensory-Friendly Activities:

Movement Breaks: Incorporate short movement breaks into the daily schedule to help students stay engaged. For example, incorporate a whole classroom stretching activity or allow students to take a walk to the water fountain.

Calming Techniques: Teach students relaxation/mindfulness techniques such as deep breathing exercises or yoga.

By recognizing the importance of sensory management in schools, we can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments. OTs and SLPs, in collaboration with educators and caregivers, play a pivotal role in ensuring that every child's sensory needs are met in the school environment. Together, we can empower our students to thrive academically and emotionally, fostering a brighter future for all. Let's continue to work together to nurture their minds and unlock their full potential through effective sensory management in the school environment.

Glynnis Jones

Glynnis Jones, OTD, OTR/L
Assistant Professor, Occupational Therapy Program,
Moravian University

Greetings From Your StAMP Representative



In this **Keystater**, information regarding clinically appropriate medical diagnoses for treatment of communication and swallowing disorders is offered. This article also contains information of interest for those using or responsible for the Brief Interview for Mental Status (BIMS) in post-acute care settings as well as access information for a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) “Briefing Card” that was recently issued for those servicing through Home Health Agencies.

Earlier this year, I addressed how many clinicians have concerns with selecting diagnosis codes related to the treatment they are providing. As shared in the earlier article, “... *With respect to diagnosis codes, it is our responsibility to select the most specific diagnosis for the disease or disorder being addressed. If the medical team hasn’t included that diagnosis, we need to ask to have it added to the medical record. If we aren’t successful, the diagnosis list could be considered incomplete, and the insurance payer may never know the specific reason for SLP treatment.*” Some clinicians may want guidance to identify appropriate diagnosis codes for our services. For Medicare (and most insurance) coverage, there are two sets of diagnosis codes to consider:

medical diagnosis and treatment diagnosis.

If you are wondering if the medical diagnosis(es) assigned to your patient or client will align with treatment for your services, an excellent resource is the *2023 ICD-10 CM Diagnosis Codes Related to Speech, Language and Swallowing Disorders* (<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/icd-10-codes-slp.pdf>). This resource is revised annually and is often based on a combination of clinical and payment data ASHA has been able to access. Clinical justification for treatment of those with listed medical diagnoses should allow for services to be considered justified and clinically appropriate. There are times this ASHA medical diagnosis list will be changed, and you learn the ICD 10 you were using is no longer accurate or considered clinically appropriate. That may be due to revisions to the national ICD 10 CM list. Each year a revised ICD 10 CM list is posted. For those who would like to know if you might see a 2024 change in a currently accepted medical diagnosis code, 2024 revisions have recently been issued and may be accessed through this link: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/coverage/determination-process/basics/icd-10>.

Those servicing post-acute care settings are familiar with the BIMS. In some settings, the speech-language pathologist is responsible for completion of this interview while elsewhere this may be assigned to nursing, social services or another member of

the post-acute team. Since its implementation, the BIMS has presented challenges as it was never intended to be a full cognitive assessment nor is it standardized to capture mild cognitive impairments. In recent years, CMS has noted inconsistencies between findings obtained through the BIMS and results of a comprehensive cognitive assessment. In an effort to decrease inconsistencies, CMS has recently issued a YouTube education for those who administer and score the BIMS. The three-minute BIMS education may be accessed through this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVhqbtZRNpC>.

A recent CMS publication for home health agencies is focused on better identification of changes in clinical status. A CMS “Briefing Card” titled *Monitoring for and Responding to Signs of Deterioration in Clinical Status*, has been issued as guidance to members of the home health care team. It outlines the responsibilities to report and address patient changes in clinical status. For those serving the home care population, the information can be found in the *Home Health: Expanded Home Health Value Based Purchasing Model Newsletter*: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/hhvbpm-newsletter-sept2023.pdf>.

Joanne M. Wisely

Joanne M. Wisely, MA, CCC-SLP, FNAP
PSHA StAMP Representative

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ASHA State Education Advocacy Leaders (SEALs) Update



CEO Live Chat – Open Forum

On July 27, 2023, ASHA's CEO (Vicki Deal-Williams) and ASHA's Board President (Dr. Bob Augustine) hosted a virtual live chat and Q&A.

• What is ASHA doing to reduce burnout in SLPs? Has ASHA considered caseload caps for school-based SLPs?

This was one of the top questions and continues to be one of the top issues brought up by ASHA membership. ASHA acknowledges that the workload of school-based SLPs was exasperated during the pandemic and that many administrators and supervisors don't fully understand our roles. Therefore, ASHA has tried to take a multi-pronged approach by educating administrators and supervisors.

• **The Value of the Cs campaign** has been helpful in getting them the information that will help them to understand the value of certified SLPs and Educational Audiologists in the schools -- Home - ASHA Certified.

• **A Workload Caseload Boot Camp** was held at the ASHA Schools Connect conference in July. Members who participated in it, found it extremely helpful as practitioners shared some strategies to make inroads with their own administrators and supervisors.

• **A Strategic Solution** session was also held at School Connect to target what ASHA can be doing to enhance the preparation of individuals who are beginning their careers in school settings – what they need to know about

managing caseloads, about advocating for what they can and can't do and how they work through situations that they might encounter with their administrators or supervisors.

• Regarding **Caseload Caps**, many will recall that in 1993, ASHA set a caseload cap of 45; however, since it was a recommendation and not enforceable, it turned into the minimum because principals or administrators were not abiding by that number, adding more and more to school-based SLP caseloads. Between 2000-2003, the field shifted toward a workload approach, as it became apparent that a caseload number does not represent the workload demands that school-based SLPs manage and that besides providing direct services to students, consultations, paperwork, billing and other duties are included as well.

• The ASHA Workload Calculator provides a visual representation of the amount of work school-based SLPs do and how they spend their time that can be shared with school administrators. You can also use tools, like a template letter, to advocate for yourself and find the right words.

• ASHA is putting the focus back on eligibility and what is contributing to making caseloads high, analyzing the number on the front-end before it continues to grow.

• Reimbursement and Insurance

• ASHA recognizes that reimbursement is a major pain for nearly all members. For that reason, ASHA's top advocacy priority is securing appropriate coverage of and payment for school-based SLP services. Due to a variety of factors (legislation and regulation), audiologists and SLPs have faced declining Medicare Part B payments.

Over the years, federal cuts have piled up, potentially leading to double-digit Medicare reimbursement cuts.

• As inflation rises, providers are experiencing a rise in the cost of providing care without commensurate increases in Medicare payments.

• ASHA is advocating for a bill called the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which would permanently update Medicare payments based on Medicare inflation, offsetting some cuts in other areas.

• Compensation

• ASHA is working with State Associations on salary supplements within their states so that SLPs gain additional payment for their certification and that insurers/payers fully understand the necessity of the services that school-based SLPs provide.

• Why are ASHA dues so high?

• ASHA dues are intended to help ASHA cover the expenses to provide the services that are offered to ASHA members. It was noted that ASHA dues have not been raised in 13 years! ASHA acknowledged that there is so much more that the membership needs from them.

▪ This is why ASHA launched the **Member Value Project** this year to try to focus on those areas that are most critical to the membership and make sure to offer the services that are needed in a manner that is easiest for the membership to access.

Hope Warner

Hope Warner, MS, CCC-SLP
Pennsylvania ASHA SEAL & Northeastern SEAL
Champion

Student Voice

My name is Maggie Merk, and I am the new student representative to the PSHA Executive Board for the 2023-2024 academic year.

I am grateful to learn from and work with the PSHA Executive Board this year and connect with students across our Commonwealth. I am currently a second-year graduate student at Moravian University where I will graduate in May of 2024, with my master's degree in speech-language pathology.

I was first introduced to the field when my grandfather had a massive ischemic stroke and at a very young age, I discovered how rural health care barriers can impact quality of life and caregiver burden. When I lost the ability to communicate with my best friend overnight, I felt a sense of devotion to creating solutions for patients and their families in the same position.

Through my education at Moravian, I've grown to appreciate the diversity that speech-language pathology can offer. With big aspirations in mind, I'm happy to bring this mindset to PSHA and interact with students all over our state. My goal for my term is to ensure that students are encouraged to make effective change within our profession(s) and have confidence to use their voices to spread awareness on important issues related to all things speech, language and hearing. Although just entering the field can feel intimidating for a variety of reasons, we are the voices that can enact change to improve conditions for us and those we serve.

I have begun contacting the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA) chapters to introduce myself and establish liaisons. Going forward, I will be in contact with liaisons regarding the PSHA Convention,

fundraising opportunities and anything else student-centered.

Students—I encourage you to join any of the PSHA committees which are not only great for networking and resumé building, but an excellent opportunity to learn about the behind-the-scenes in our fields. Please reach out to me with interest!

I encourage liaisons and students to reach out to me at PSHAstudents@gmail.com, merkmm@moravian.edu or connect on LinkedIn: @MargaretMerk.

Please give us a follow on social media for updates and news: @PSHAstudents

Here's to a wonderful year!

Maggie Merk

Maggie Merk
PSHA Student Representative

PLAN Experience Summary



Hi! My name is Isabelle Snyder, and I am a senior undergraduate student at Pennsylvania Western University Clarion. I chose to participate in the PSHA Leadership and Advocacy Network (PLAN) Leadership Development Program because I thought it was a great way to gain

knowledge and get more involved within PSHA.

Not only did I learn great leadership skills from ASHA-led videos, but I also got to meet a wonderful group of people. I enjoyed the lectures, but my favorite parts were hearing stories of how other students and professionals used the strategies we learned in their specific field of speech-language pathology. At first it was very intimidating being so early in my career compared to others, but the set-up of the program allowed me to feel comfortable to speak up and be included within the conversation.

Since then, I have become more confident to get involved and take on leadership positions. I went on

a therapy abroad trip to Bulgaria where I worked with the head speech-language pathologist to create a low-tech AAC device for an individual with cerebral palsy. I've become more involved within PSHA by joining different committees including the Fall Convention Committee and the PLAN Organizing Committee. In addition to becoming more involved within a variety of teams and organizations at school, I am very grateful for the skills and opportunities I have gained through the PLAN Leadership Program.

Isabelle Snyder

Isabelle Snyder

Interested in supporting students to attend the PLAN Leadership Program?

PSHA invites you to sponsor a student participating in the PLAN Leadership Program. Sponsorship costs \$50 per student. Isabella was able to participate in the program thanks to the generous support of our members. By providing sponsorship, you can ensure other students are given the same opportunity. For more information, contact psa@psa.org.



Are you an SLP that provides services for preschool children?

Refer your parents to Parent Plus! Parents Plus is an **online** parent training program that teaches parents how to help with their preschool children's vocabulary and grammar at home.

Right now, Parent Plus is free of charge for eligible parents.

Brook Sawyer, Ph.D. (Lehigh University) and Carol Scheffner Hammer, Ph.D. and CCC-SLP (Teachers College) are currently conducting a federally-funded (IES) research study of Parents Plus to investigate how well it works to help preschool children develop vocabulary and morphosyntax.

Eligibility

We are looking to offer this program for free to parents:

- of a preschool child (ages 3-5) with language delays who speak in 2-4 word sentences
- live within an hour (approximate) of Allentown/Bethlehem, PA
- speak English in the home with their preschool child (can be bilingual)
- are interested in learning more about Parents Plus

Parents will receive a \$15 Amazon gift card once we assess their children's language skills to determine eligibility for the study. If enrolled in the study, additional incentives are offered.

SLPs also receive a \$10 Amazon gift card for each family that they refer to the study and who agree to the initial eligibility assessment.

How do I Learn More?



Contact the Parents Plus team by completing this [google form](#)



Visit our [Facebook page](#) to learn more



Go to our [website](#) to learn more

To learn more or ask questions, please contact Brook Sawyer, Lehigh University at brooksawyer@lehigh.edu; 610-758-3236.

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IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Scan the QR code to be directed to the PSHA website to renew your PSHA membership. Want to skip the 3% credit card processing fee? Mail in a check to the PSHA Office, 700 McKnight Park Drive, Suite 708, Pittsburgh, PA 15237.

Questions? Contact PSHA at psps@pspa.org or 412-366-9858.



Renewal invoices will not be mailed this year. A postcard similar to the graphic above will be sent.

When renewing your membership, don't forget to make your contribution to PSHA's Capital Campaign. Thank you to all the members who have contributed in the past. Please consider lending your financial support to ensure that the structure of PSHA remains strong.