

Keystater

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Message From the President – Erin Buckwalter



Welcome to fall! It's hard to believe how quickly 2024 is happening. It's also hard to believe I've already been PSHA's president for three months. It's

been an honor, and I am grateful for this opportunity. My time on the PSHA Board and my current presidency continually remind me of the critical, multifaceted work and efforts you all complete daily. I am happy to serve you, the members, the PSHA Board, and the committees who work diligently to uphold PSHA's mission.

I am thrilled to announce a significant event in our advocacy calendar – Hill Day in Harrisburg held on October 22. This was a crucial opportunity for us to work closely with our lobbyist, Angie, from McNees Winter Group, to raise awareness about our professions and build relationships with legislators. We distributed information sheets, engaged with legislators and held a press conference. Current and past board members and some of our committee chairs and members attended the event. See the article PSHA Hill Day 2024 on page 5 for more information on this event.

PSHA's Fall Event will occur on November 12 from 6:00-8:00 pm. This event is virtual. The event will host three breakout rooms on the following topics: Advanced Career Pathways; Building Belonging (DEI), which will target feedback, mentoring, belonging and inclusion for SLPs; and Ethics and Advocacy (Ethics), focusing on how to enact change in policy and procedure through advocacy efforts.

Participants will choose their breakout in advance of the event.

After the breakouts, which will all carry ASHA CEUs, PSHA will bring everyone back to the main Zoom room for the Town Hall. The Town Hall will highlight all of PSHA's current work. It is an evening packed with information, and we look forward to seeing you at the event.

The PSHA's Annual Convention is set for March 20-22, 2025. PSHA will host the Convention again this year in Pittsburgh. Due to financial reasons, we selected the Pittsburgh location for the second year in a row. The slogan for this year is the ***Ripple Effect - Advancing Knowledge, Inspiring Change***. As the slogan states, this Convention is an event and a platform that inspires change and advances knowledge in our professions. A fabulous line of speakers will cover varied areas of our professions. And, as always, there are several wonderful student-specific sessions. Stay tuned to social media, the *InBrief* and the *Keystater* for further details. Also, watch our social media outlets and website for information on our 2026 Convention. The Convention will return to the eastern side of the state in 2026!

Our advocacy work has been a continuous focus this summer and fall. I want to thank our vice president of governmental relations, our lobbyist, the board and all the committees for their relentless advocacy for PSHA. While you can find more details on our legislative endeavors later in this newsletter, I want to highlight one area of work. PSHA remains actively involved in, the Triallance, working closely with our fellow occupational therapists and physical therapists to address Highmark and Medicaid challenges. Our private practice

committee, StAMP representative, past president, president-elect and ASHA maintain consistent communication and action to negate reimbursement concerns. Many thanks for their ongoing efforts. Again, please read on to review the other important areas of legislative advocacy.

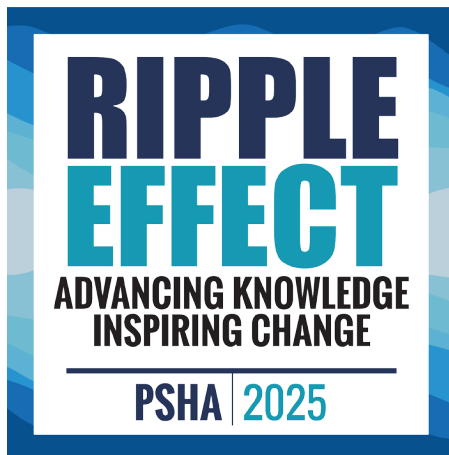
Before closing, we continue to look to our members to contribute to PSHA efforts. Whether engaging new members, volunteering on committees or the board, donating or giving feedback, PSHA appreciates all actions to support our continued mission and vision. If you're interested in volunteering for one of our committees (Schools, Government Relations, Telehealth/Healthcare, Private Practice and DEIA), please visit our social media sites for more information. Also, please visit social media to learn more about PSHA's new Early Intervention Task Force and the start of our third cohort for the Leadership Development Program. Finally, PSHA's website offers further information on financial donations and current updates.

In closing, once again, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support of our organization. Through our collective efforts, we can promote advocacy, advance knowledge and inspire change, resulting in the continued success of the speech-language pathology and audiology professions. Your involvement is crucial, and I look forward to our future endeavors together.

Erin Buckwalter

Erin Buckwalter, MS, CCC-SLP
President

2025 PSHA Convention Pittsburgh March 19-22



The PSHA Convention returns to Pittsburgh from March 20-22, 2025! This year's theme is ***Ripple Effect: Inspiring Knowledge, Advancing Change***. Just like a single drop of water in a still pond, change creates ripples that extend far beyond its origin. Our commitment to this field doesn't just impact individual lives—it sends waves of transformation through families, communities and beyond.

The PSHA Convention Committee is thrilled to announce our fabulous slate of expert speakers for the three-hour MasterClass Sessions, many of which offer interprofessional perspectives:

- Pediatric:
 - o Treating School-Age Speech Sound Disorders With Speech Motor Chaining (Jonathan Preston, PhD, CCC-SLP and Nina Benway, PhD CCC-SLP)
 - o Embracing Discomfort: Learning How to Effectively Help Children With Anxiety (Kimberly Morrow, LCSW)
 - o Cleft and Craniofacial Clinical Management (Matt Ford, CCC-SLP and Shelley Myers, CCC-A)
- Adult:
 - o Treatment of Speech in Individuals With Parkinson Disease (Jessica Huber, PhD, CCC-SLP)

- o Optimizing Rehabilitation for People With Cognitive Impairments (Elizabeth Skidmore, PhD, OTR/L)
- o Cognitive Rehabilitation (Alyssa Lanzi, PhD, CCC-SLP)
- Multi-Interest:
 - o Auditory Processing Disorders (Maegan Mapes, PhD, CCC-A)
 - o Advocacy in Stuttering Legislation (Brandon Markosek, State Representative and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, Advocate and Former NBA player)
- o PSHA Committee Roundtables (Representatives from the PSHA committees including: Healthcare & Telepractice, Private Practice, Schools, DEIA, Higher Ed and Government Relations)

In addition to these featured sessions, we had a wonderful call for papers. We will offer one-hour sessions, 30-minute technical session and posters. The Convention will continue to offer a student track, an early career track, raffles, VIP drawing and of course, a lot of learning and community building! A final schedule will be available in the upcoming weeks.

A sincere thank you to the Convention Planning Committee and PSHA Office for helping to plan a Convention that is bound to make waves. We can't wait to see you at the Pittsburgh Sheraton at Station Square in March, 2025! 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

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.

The statements and opinions contained in the articles of the **Keystater** are solely those of the individual authors and contributors and not of the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The appearance of advertisements in the newsletter is not a warranty, endorsement or approval of the products or of their safety. PSHA disclaims responsibility for any injury to persons or property resulting from any ideas or products referred to in the articles or advertisements.

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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

THANK YOU, as always to those of you who have completed surveys, read bills and submitted feedback on legislative items. These tasks are essential to a robust advocacy program! If you want to join one of our many committees, or have other feedback, please complete an advocacy inquiry form.

EXCITING NEWS: HB2268, Providing Insurance Coverage of Speech Therapy for Stuttering, continues to make excellent progress through the legislative process, passing the House in June and passing the Senate just this week. It will be on Governor Shapiro's desk soon. Thanks again to all who assisted in this effort.

MORE EXCITING NEWS: We have more movement on the interstate compact! HB2200, FBI-Approved Language to Implement Licensure Compacts was signed into law on July 17, becoming Act 79 of 2024. This paves the way for PA licensees to participate in compacts. There are still a few more steps for already enacted compacts to go fully into effect, but this is great progress. We are hopeful for movement on our compact bill early in the next session.

EVEN MORE EXCITING NEWS: We took our advocacy to Harrisburg, for Hill Day October 22! PSHA members from across the state educated legislators on the important role speech-language pathologists and audiologists play in supporting health, educational and employment outcomes for Pennsylvanians, as well as some barriers to care that we would love to collaborate on. Please check our social media to hear how it went!

LEGISLATOR MEETINGS: In July, PSHA members met with legislators to discuss two important pieces of legislation. We discussed HB 2435, which would create an Office of School Facilities in PDE, with Representative Fiedler's staff, and HB 2385, which would allow for insurance coverage of interprofessional practice, with Representative Powell.

HARRISBURG HIGHLIGHTS: The fall session in the PA legislature has been quiet compared to earlier this year.

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We suspect this is related to pending actions which may shift the balance of power in the House and impact the trajectory of any proposed legislation.

Angie Armbrust, from McNees Winter Group, provided a summary of highlights from Harrisburg at our most recent board meeting in September, as follows:

SB739, Telemedicine: signed into law on July 3, became Act 42 of 2024

HB1867, Prohibiting Mandatory Electronic Credit Card Payment Fees Charged to Health Care Providers for Reimbursement of In-Network Clinical Services: voted out of House on June 4, awaits action in Senate Banking and Insurance Committee.

HB1235, Authorizing Pennsylvania to Join the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact: awaiting action in the House Professional Licensure Committee.

SB393 Educator certification and employment for immigrants in Pennsylvania/HB1067, Educator Certification and Employment for Immigrants in Pennsylvania: a provision was included in the Education Code bill, which passed alongside the General Fund budget bill, that adds "Authorized to work in the United States" to the qualifications to be a public school teacher, accomplishing what these bills aimed to do.

HB1668 Protections for Drivers With Autism/SB932 'Communication Impairment' License Designation for Autistic, Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Assisting First Responders/HB1811 Communication Impairment License Designations for Autistic, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Drivers: While none of these bills have progressed this session, the PA State Police have created a card that can be carried by individuals with autism, to signify potential barriers to safe communication. It's not the license designation for all communication disorders, like the legislation we had advocated for, but it is a first step in creating a safer process. You can find information about the card for your patients/students at <https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/psp/resources/safety-resources.html>.

PSHA continues to monitor many bills with support from McNees/Winter:

HB2011, Removing Lead from Drinking Water in Schools

HB1249, Tax Credit for New Nurses, Teachers, and Police Officers

HB342 Improving College Transition for Students with Disabilities

HB57, Professional License Applications—Paper Applications – Former HB 855

SB514, Requiring Child Lead Testing

HB998, Literacy Achievement for All Pennsylvanians

State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology PROPOSED Regulation #16A6808: Licensure by Endorsement:

HB1356 Licensure of Professional Music Therapists under the Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Act (Former HB 2573)

SB898 Licensure of Professional Music Therapists

HB498, Voluntary autism screening for children from 18 months to 36 months

HB1609/HR181 Insurance Coverage of Hearing Aids

HR155 Recognizing June as National Aphasia Awareness Month

PA Department of Insurance Commonwealth Essential Health Benefits Benchmark Plan

HB143 Pennsylvania Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program

HB928 Creating Dyslexia Intervention Professional Development Requirements (Formerly HB 2780)

HB1104 Michael's Law —Admission Fairness for Persons with Care Attendants

HB1510 Health Care Practitioner Credentialing Act (Prior HB 2613)

HB342 Improving College Transition for Students with Disabilities

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

PSHA Hill Day 2024: Advocating for Improved Access to Communication Care in Pennsylvania



The Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) hosted an impactful Advocacy Day, also known as Hill Day, on October 22, 2024. This event marked a significant step for PSHA Leadership in strengthening advocacy efforts for individuals with communication disorders and demonstrated the collective dedication of members in advancing the profession's legislative priorities.

A diverse delegation of PSHA members, including university faculty, speech-language pathologists (from multiple settings), students, and family members of individuals with disabilities, met with numerous legislators to advocate for better access to

care for Pennsylvanians with communication and swallowing needs. They also sought support for audiologists and speech-language pathologists to continue providing the vital services they deliver. The discussions underscored the growing need for legislative action to support individuals with communication and swallowing needs across Pennsylvania.

The day culminated in a press conference themed "Improving Access to Care for Pennsylvanians with Communication Disorders." Representatives Arvind Venkat and Brandon J. Markosek joined PSHA delegates to address key initiatives. One of the central points of celebration was House Bill 2268

(<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20230&cosponId=42586>), which was signed into law by the governor on October 21, 2024 (the day before) and ensures insurance coverage for speech therapy services for individuals who stutter. The PSHA delegation expressed gratitude to Representative Markosek for championing this vital bill, emphasizing how his leadership improves the lives of individuals with fluency disorders.

Additionally, Representative Arvind Venkat spoke about House Bill 1235 Interstate Compact bill (<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20230&cosponId=42586>), which he sponsored, recognizing the progress on these compacts as a critical achievement for expanding access to care for Pennsylvania residents. PSHA delegates thanked the legislators for their ongoing support, noting the significant impact these efforts have on improving care for individuals with communication disorders throughout the state.

A special thanks to the PSHA board, PSHA Governmental Relations Committee and Angie Armbrust from McNees Government Relations for your time and dedication in making this event a huge success.

PSHA 2025 Honors and Awards – Nominations Open

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.

Amy Francek

Amy Francek, MA, CCC-SLP
Vice President for Membership and Ethical Practices

ASHA State Education Advocacy Leaders (SEALs) Update



An Exploration of Caseload Issues and Trends

In May, Tim Boyd, ASHA's Director of State Health Care and Education Affairs, met with state education advocacy leaders to discuss school-based SLP caseload trends. The State Affairs Team is focusing on target states to address caseloads, workloads and the Attract Prepare Retain (APR) initiative. A key topic was the Workload Calculator, which district administrators seek ASHA's feedback on. Sarah Furlong from North Carolina raised concerns that it might increase caseloads from 50 to 60 students. Karen Kockler noted Illinois requires a maximum of 60 students per SLP. A legislative meeting is set for June 5 to discuss these issues further.

Salary Supplement Data Compilation

In June, Eileen Crowe, ASHA's Director of State Association Relations, provided an update on the roll-out of the Local District Salary Supplement Survey. She urged ASHA SEALs to investigate salary supplements available in school districts, particularly through collective bargaining agreements. Crowe noted that Oregon offers a \$9,000 supplement for SLPs with two years of service and a \$2,000 supplement for SLPAs. In Pennsylvania, most school districts do not provide supplements for ASHA-certified SLPs. The issue at hand is ensuring that ASHA-certified audiologists and SLPs receive salary supplements, which could help address shortages in these professions by supporting recruitment and retention efforts. These professionals can also bring substantial Medicaid funding to school districts. Crowe called for support in passing legislation for these salary supplements.

Update on the Interstate Compact

In July, Susan Adams, ASHA's Director of State Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, provided an update on the Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC), an agreement facilitating interstate practice for audiologists and speech-language pathologists. Under this compact, professionals licensed in a member state will be eligible to practice in other compact states via a "compact privilege," equivalent to a license. Currently, 34 states have enacted the legislation, but the compact won't be operational until 2025, as data systems are still being developed. Pennsylvania is considering a bill to join the compact, though opposition from nursing unions has emerged, particularly regarding interstate practice during strikes. Concerns were also raised about the compact's impact on Black and Brown SLPs, as remote services are more affordable and accessible, though in-person treatment is often more effective.

Comprehensive Analysis of Salaries and Contract Language for California SLPs

Continuing the conversation on salaries, in September, Amie Morissette, an SLP from California, shared the results of her study of salaries and contract language for California SLPs.

Open Reporting on SEALs Activities in States

In October, SEALs held an open session to share updates, highlighting ASHA's School Hearing Screening Tracking and free speaker opportunities through the ASHA Board of Directors. A major focus was on recruiting and retaining school-based SLPs, with ASHA's Schools Survey highlighting challenges such as salary, workload, caseload size and working conditions. ASHA also distributed a "Dismissal

from Speech/Language Services in Schools Survey 2024" to gather data on district and state criteria for dismissal and eligibility. The next Town Hall Series, "Ensuring Equity - Unpacking Disproportionality in Speech-Language Services," is set for December 11, 2024. Pennsylvania updates included Governor Shapiro's SLP Graduate Student Extern Stipend (\$5,000) to encourage externships in public schools, the PSHA Hill Day on October 22, and support for a bill by Michael Kidd-Gilchrist's "Change & Impact Foundation" advocating for insurance coverage for stuttering treatment. Additionally, PaTTAN's SLP training series offers free ASHA CEUs to school-based SLPs, mirroring ASHA's Town Hall series.

This year has seen significant advancements for school-based SLPs across the US. ASHA is focusing on recruiting and retaining qualified SLPs through initiatives like the Schools Survey, which highlights employment conditions. The Local District Salary Supplement Survey and Oregon's new salary supplements are vital for fair compensation. The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC) will enhance interstate practice by 2025. In Pennsylvania, Governor Shapiro's SLP externship stipend and PSHA Hill Day reflect a commitment to improving outcomes and working conditions. ASHA's Town Hall Series and free CEU opportunities will further support professional growth and equity in speech-language services.

Hope Warner

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

State Advocates for Reimbursement (STAR) Updates



Who is a PSHA STAR?

A STAR is a State Appointed

Representative (STAR) appointed by PSHA to serve as a liaison between PSHA and ASHA regarding Medicaid and private insurance topics.

STARs from all 50 states write reports to ASHA and meet on the second Wednesday of each month. STARs from PA, ND, SC, NV, IL, and OR collaborate about Private Practice Subcommittees in their states. STAR meetings are co-chaired by Caroline Bergner, JD, Director, Health Care Policy, Medicaid – Government Affairs & Public Policy Cluster (ASHA) and Meghan Ryan, MSL, Director, Health Care Policy, Private Health Plans (ASHA). The official STARs description is: "The STARs provide leadership, guidance and support on topics related to coverage, reimbursement and the delivery of services under state Medicaid programs and private payers." You can see our landing page for all the networks here: State-Based Advocacy Networks (asha.org). This may be a helpful place to direct folks with questions. STARs attend PSHA Town Halls and PSHA Board Meetings.

Let me tell you a little about me.

I graduated from Bloomsburg University in 1979 (BS) and 1980 (MS) from the Speech-Language Pathology Program. I worked in rehabilitation, skilled nursing, private practice, public schools and am currently at Misericordia University initially teaching phonetics and now serve as a clinical supervisor in the Speech-Language Pathology Department. I am a certified speech-language pathologist and reading specialist with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. My membership history with PSHA and ASHA qualified me for Life Membership.

How did I become a PSHA STAR?

A colleague of mine, Reethee Antony, PhD, CCC-SLP, assistant professor,

speech-language pathology, at Misericordia University, and chair of the PSHA Healthcare Committee asked me to join the PSHA Healthcare Committee in March 2023. Dr. Antony is now at Binghamton University but continues to share her talents with us here in PA. I learned that there was a request for someone to take on the STAR position in March 2024, so I took advantage of the opportunity to apply to volunteer and was appointed by PSHA in April 2024. I am so grateful to our former STAR, Caterina F. Staltari, MA, CCC-SLP, clinical education coordinator, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology at Duquesne University for educating me, partnering with me for this transition and coaching me to fill this position.

What is the PSHA Healthcare-Telepractice Committee?

The PSHA Healthcare Committee began in 2021. The PSHA Telepractice Committee was formed in May 2022. They were two separate committees which merged to form the PSHA Healthcare-Telepractice Committee in January 2023, due to limited participation for telepractice separately and many of the legislative issues at that time due to COVID-19 were overlapping. The Private Practice subcommittee was formed in February 2024, as a division of the PSHA Healthcare-Telepractice Committee due to its unique concerns holding its first official meeting on May 20, 2024. We currently have 21 members. Meetings are held monthly or more often based on need. We are currently working to address reimbursement, preauthorization and value-based care issues in PA by creating surveys for our members to gather data, writing letters to private insurance companies and Medicaid, meeting with Highmark executives, watching state legislation for new bills and partnering with PT and OT as a tri-alliance task force for Medicaid and private insurance. Caroline Bergner, Meghan Ryan, and Rebecca Bowen, Director of Health Care Policy, Value and Innovation, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) have been so supportive.

We started posting to recruit members to the committees through social media beginning in October 2021. Additional recruiting efforts included annual PSHA Convention, word of mouth, board meetings, town hall meetings, *Keystater* Newsletter, thematic discussions and grand rounds. A few of the topics included Billing, Clinical Supervision, AAC, Pediatric Voice, Dysphagia, Trach & Vent (October 23, 2024), and we are currently working on an ASL for SLPs in the Healthcare Setting Virtual Event for February 2025 collaborating with the Sign Language Club at Misericordia University in Dallas, PA, under the advisership of Erin Roberts, MS, CCC-SLP, assistant professor, Speech-Language Pathology Department, Misericordia University. Professional SLPs and graduate SLP students are welcome to our grand rounds. Watch for the announcements on social media.

Our chair and co-chair of the PSHA Healthcare-Telepractice Committee after Dr. Reethee Antony's term ended were Nancy Carlino, MA, CCC-SLP, associate professor and chair, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Pennsylvania Western University and Jenna Gregor, MS, CCC-SLP, faculty, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Pennsylvania Western University. Our current chair and co-chair after their terms ended are Akila T. Rajappa, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S, associate professor, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, director, East Stroudsburg University, and Staci Sorrell, MA, CCC-SLP, adjunct professor of the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department, West Chester University of Pennsylvania, and full-time SLP at Jefferson Health. The chair of our Private Practice Subcommittee is Emily Aten-Newberry, MS, CCC-SLP PA/L, Owner of Above and Beyond Speech Therapy, LLC.

STARs follow Legislation and Bills in Harrisburg

The Telemedicine Bill 2024 Act 42 was approved by PA Gov. Josh Shapiro in July 2024. H. B. 2268

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Providing Insurance Coverage of Speech Therapy for Stuttering was approved in October 2024. PSHA continues to follow several Bills in the House. Rep. Powell's Bill for Insurance Coverage for Interprofessional Consultation and Rep. Venkat's Bill for Interstate Compact for Licensure.

MEDICAID UPDATE

Our PSHA – ASHA Survey on Medicaid Reimbursement for PA Private Practice Owners was released on October 8, 2024, to PSHA members and will be released to ASHA members in PA next week! The deadline for completion is October 22, 2024. The 30-question survey will help PSHA as we prepare for the 2025

legislative session. We would appreciate your participation in this brief survey on insurance and Medicaid reimbursement in Pennsylvania. PSHA and ASHA are using this data to help advocate for reimbursement rate increases for you. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a chance to win a free registration for the PSHA Convention. The Tri-alliance Medicaid Task Force with PT, OT and speech contributed to this effort. Check Facebook for Social Media Posts.

PRIVATE INSURANCE UPDATE

ASHA wrote a letter to Highmark on August 12, 2024, on behalf of PSHA regarding reimbursement, preauthorization, and value-based care concerns. Our Private Practice advocacy group met with Highmark's VP of Provider Contracting and Relations-Central DE and NEPA on August 20, 2024. Our Tri-alliance Highmark Task Force with PT, OT, ST and its PSHA-ASHA Subcommittee met in person with Highmark representatives on August 26, 2024, in Pittsburgh.

Theresa Jacopetti

Theresa Jacopetti, MS, CCC-SLP
Past STAR Representative

Greetings From Your StAMP Representative



Many of you are reading this article after the November

2024 elections. We find ourselves learning who our local US Representatives are, who our US Senators are, which party has the majority in the US Congress and who is the President of the United States. With so many changes in government leadership, are we knowledgeable and confident regarding how these will impact our profession and our services? We all know that change is inevitable but an immediate change in who we service, what we do or how we do it just doesn't happen. Our patients/clients/students need us and we must adhere to our ethical standards to do all we can to facilitate functional communication. As we continue our professional mission of service, we also have a responsibility to be aware of impending laws, revised payment policies or the possibility of treatment methods having to adjust to current regulation.

For those servicing the Medicare population, there is a revised

Medicare fee schedule for 2025. Effective January 1 and despite intense advocacy efforts, several services have been valued with reduced payment (See <https://www.asha.org/news/2024/medicare-issues-2025-proposed-payment-policies-for-outpatient-services/>). This has been an ongoing challenge for the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology because the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) must defer to the national budget and the need to remain "budget neutral". Budget neutrality allows for minimal change in the overall cost of the Medicare program until Congress provides a budget that increases the allocation for healthcare services. That type of increase hasn't happened in a very long time. Paired with payment reductions, advocacy efforts to allow speech pathologists to be approved Medicare providers of telehealth have been unsuccessful. As this article goes to print, the temporary waiver extended during and after the COVID public health emergency sunsets on December 31, 2024. As a result, and despite state rules that may allow SLPs to provide telehealth services, Medicare is to no longer cover these services for Medicare beneficiaries. Advocacy efforts

continue to have SLP telehealth provider status made permanent.

What can be done to allow us to be the best professionals we can be? First, we must never stop centering efforts on those we serve. Our professions were founded to provide effective communication for all. We must never forget that. Second, we must educate ourselves to the ongoing changes in laws, regulations, policies and practices of our professions. If all of these don't align, we find ourselves spending more energy working around the system than we spend actually treating those who need us. Finally, we must advocate for what we know is needed to be able to be the best we can be and to assure the best outcomes for those we serve. At the minimum, monthly visits to the ASHA and the PSHA advocacy websites allow you to let all those newly elected officials know you have important work to do (see <https://www.asha.org/advocacy/takeaction/> and <https://psha.org/working-in-pa/advocacy/>). Please be certain to advocate on a regular basis. We need you. More importantly, those you serve need you!!

Joanne M. Wisely

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

Student Voice

My name is MJ Granito and I am honored and grateful to serve as the Student Representative to the PSHA Executive Board for the 2024-2025 term. I am currently an undergraduate health science major at Moravian University on a Communication Sciences and Disorders track with a minor in Spanish. While I deeply love speech-language pathology and audiology in their totality, my most profound clinical and research interests include aural rehabilitation, acquired communication and swallowing disorders, fluency disorders and cultural competency.

It is an honor to represent speech-language pathology and audiology students across the Commonwealth, all while learning from the breadth of expertise and experience from the PSHA Executive Board members.

As Student Representative, it is my mission to foster an uplifting, empowering community for students based on meaningful dialog and shared passion for speech and hearing health. As students, we have a distinct role as the future of these two

professions, and as emerging clinicians and researchers. That being said, this is certainly a student community marked by visionary leadership. As we nurture our passions and celebrate the life-changing work we embark on as students and future professionals, we cultivate a vision for the future.

As an undergraduate speech-language pathology student at Moravian University, I have seen the wealth of skills and talents that our students bring into their coursework, research, clinical observations and extracurricular engagements. It is inspiring to know that these same individuals will serve countless individuals of different ages, backgrounds and diagnoses in the near future. As I progress through my coursework, I am always delighted to meet students who enrich our fields with passions that lie in a myriad of areas. From fluency to swallowing, to pediatric language to neurogenic communication disorders, to pure-tone audiometry to pragmatics, the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology are all-encompassing, transformative and beautifully diverse.

With that said, I invite you, my fellow students, to join me in cultivating our visions for these professions. Through our up-and-coming Student Mission Statement, collaborative events and robust PSHA Convention projected for 2025, this community is filled with brilliant minds and passionate emerging professionals. It would be my honor to connect with you personally to hear your ideas, thoughts and perspectives (granitom@moravian.edu). Furthermore, stay tuned to receive updates on our vibrant Instagram Page, @pshastudents, and be on the lookout for emails as well as a Student Newsletter. I believe in you, I am here for you and your voices and perspectives are invaluable to me. PSHA is your community, your vision and your passion and your love for these fields is an integral part of the future of the Commonwealth.

Mary Jane Granito

Mary Jane Granito
PSHA Student Representative

National Speech-Language-Hearing Month Slogan Contest

It is that time again to start thinking about National Speech-Language-Hearing Month (NSLHM) for 2025. 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 NSLHM slogan. It is suggested that the Convention and NSLHM are similar or connected. The theme for the 2025 Convention is ***Ripple Effect: Advancing Knowledge Inspiring Change***.

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

- *Communication is More Than a Shot in the Dark* (2024)
- *Light the Path Toward Better Hearing and Speech* (2023)

Send your slogan ideas to psha@psha.org. The slogan contest winner receives a complimentary registration to the 2025 PSHA Convention.

Reethee Antony

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

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Why Should Students Choose to be a Part of PSHA?

A Student's Point of View

As a multilingual Asian male, I am a minority in the field of speech-language pathology (SLP). I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) from the University of Pittsburgh and my Master of Science degree in SLP from Moravian University. Because my long-term goal is to be a researcher, I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Sciences at Case Western Reserve University.

Graduate school can be challenging, and it is important not to overcommit yourself. However, if you are interested in professional growth, networking opportunities, skill development, advocacy and more diverse representation in our profession, joining the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA) can connect you with a broader network of professionals and many professional development opportunities.

Throughout my education, I have actively sought opportunities to develop professionally. One such opportunity was the Pennsylvania Leadership and Advocacy Network funded by PSHA. My involvement with and training through PSHA led to me being an active student member of the PSHA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Advocacy (DEIA) committee. Our committee planned activities, in collaboration with statewide NSSLHA chapters,

aimed at providing a safe space for students to share experiences and learn how to handle unexpected and challenging situations. We also worked to engage and empower minority students at universities across Pennsylvania. In addition, I participated in the ASHA's Minority Student Leadership Program (MSLP), a program intended to support future leaders from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Through the training I received through MSLP and PSHA, I improved my leadership and networking skills and gained a deeper understanding of the need for minority leaders and representatives in the field of healthcare. I also greatly expanded my professional network.

The PSHA Annual Convention is another great event to participate in. The PSHA Convention encourages student presentations, which allows students to share their ideas with professionals, build connections in the field and to practice professional presentations. In addition, the PSHA Convention allows students to meet with prospective employers and companies. Unlike a random career fair at your college or university, the opportunities at the PSHA Convention are specific to communication sciences and disorders.

To date, I have multiple manuscripts and opportunities to present at state and national levels. All of my

research projects are related to my long-term goal of contributing to an evidence-based treatment program for individuals with acquired brain injury that is accessible to individuals with historically underrepresented backgrounds including multilingual patients and families. Throughout this journey, I continually feel supported by the connections I made by engaging in PSHA events.

In conclusion, I highly encourage undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology to seek out opportunities to engage in leadership, extracurricular and co-curricular activities. These experiences provide valuable practical knowledge and help hone essential skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. They also facilitate the development of professional networks and contacts. Attending conferences and events and following PSHA's social media pages are excellent ways to stay informed about potential opportunities for students.

Guanyu Wei

Guanyu Wei, MS-SLP
Case Western Reserve University

Follow PSHA on Social Media

Stay up-to-date with the latest PSHA updates by following us on our social media platforms.



Speech-Language Pathology - Doctorate (SLPD) Degree at Moravian University



Moravian University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is excited to introduce the launch of a new Speech-Language Pathology-Doctorate (SLPD) degree. Housed within the School of Rehabilitation Sciences, the interdisciplinary SLPD will focus on elevating clinicians into leaders, researchers and advanced practitioners. Moravian's SLPD is built on the concept of practice-based evidence. This approach centers clinicians as the critical element when bridging the theory-to-practice gap within speech-language pathology. In the practice-based evidence framework, clinicians bring their wealth of experiences, observations and data to classroom discussions and projects. Through these opportunities, students have the ability to inform and refine clinical practice.

Moravian's SLPD is a five-semester, 46-credit-hour program designed for working professionals. Courses will be primarily offered as 8-week asynchronous online offerings that explore topics related to clinical

research and advanced clinical practice taught by content-area experts from around the country. Some courses encourage students to actively participate as practice-based evidence clinicians by refining their ability to systematically document clinical observations and communicate their findings to a broader audience. Students will come to campus during the first year of study during a summer semester for a three-day, in-person learning experience.

Within the second year of the program, SLPD students will work with a mentor to develop a project unique to their interests and goals while building and refining their areas of expertise. Projects may take many forms, and some examples are the opportunity to engage in clinical research, implement organizational change or facilitate advocacy within their community. All projects will include a dissemination plan, such as a presentation or publication, to engage a broader audience while maximizing the impact of clinician-driven change.

The interdisciplinary nature of Moravian University's SLPD program will allow students to engage with other post-professional doctoral students from athletic training and occupational therapy in specific courses. This enables students to connect the content to broader systems and to explore how concepts translate across disciplines. In addition to an interprofessional education, students will have the opportunity to earn an MBA by taking six additional courses post

completion of the SLPD. This additional credential will set SLPs apart as leaders within the field and prepare SLPs for diverse career opportunities.

It's important to note that the SLPD is not a PhD in Speech-Language Pathology. The SLPD is a post-professional, clinical doctorate that advances an clinician's knowledge and skills related to clinical practice and supports clinical research. One benefit of the SLPD is that the degree is designed to be completed while continuing a career in speech-language pathology, without the need for relocation. SLPD degree holders have expressed that an SLPD has advanced their knowledge, experiences, and opened up career opportunities (Sylvan & Becker, 2022). The goal of Moravian's SLPD is to help clinicians develop the individual skills and knowledge needed to excel and lead within the field.

For more information, email Dr. Klaire Brumbaugh, SLPD Program Director, at brumbuaghk@moravian.edu

Reference

Sylvan, L., & Becker, R. (2022). Understanding the experiences of students within doctor of speech-language pathology programs: Perceptions about their educational experiences. Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups, 7(4), 1087-1105.

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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.