

Keystater

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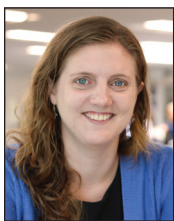
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Message From the President – Louise Keegan



We are all part of a wonderful profession! As speech-language pathologists and audiologists, we can positively impact others, promote

communication and well-being and contribute to the greater good of our communities in Pennsylvania. We are part of teams (healthcare professionals, educators, caregivers, families) where the members most often have similar goals.

There are a variety of professional settings available to us (schools, private practice, hospitals, clinics, universities, etc.), and finally we have amazing opportunities to:

- 1) engage in advocacy for ourselves and our clients,
- 2) pursue professional growth and continued learning and
- 3) build strong collaborative relationships with each other and those we serve.

PSHA, as a state organization, supports us all as we seek out these opportunities and here, I will highlight some of the ways in which we strive to support our members and professions in this way. The PSHA Executive Board works hard behind the scenes to advance the goals of the organization, the various committee members also contribute to these efforts and each practitioner in the state, and every one of you, as members, plays a part in the success of our organization and profession.

Engage in Advocacy

Our board members and committees have been working hard to advocate for our professions since our last Keystater. This is a list of some of the issues we have been addressing:

- We have been working with Pennsylvania Department of Education and Program Directors of SLP programs across the state to address the movement between certification types and the

certification pathways for working in the education system in the state.

- The schools committee has been developing a workload-caseload document and toolkit resources for speech-language pathologists working in the school settings: <https://psha.org/school-based-resource-toolkit/>
- We have been supporting the progress towards an interstate compact for speech-language pathologists and audiologists in Pennsylvania.
- We have developed a tri-alliance with the occupational therapy (POTA) and physical therapy (APTA-PA) state associations, where we have been collaboratively addressing issues related to insurance reimbursement and more.
- The Healthcare/Telepractice Committee has been monitoring the healthcare issues and telepractice changes that are developing, with the end of the COVID emergency provisions.
- The Governmental Affairs Committee has been monitoring and weighing in on the language of many bills and co-sponsor memos over the last few months that address; educational certification for immigrants, improving the college transition for students with disabilities, child lead testing, teacher loan forgiveness, autism early screening processes, music therapy, the interstate compact and many more.
- The DEI committee has been active in advocating for issues of diversity, equity and inclusion across the state, and had a large presence at Convention, awarding badges to DEI focused talks and providing resources to our members <https://tinyurl.com/3rhf87z3>.

Pennsylvania NSSLHA students also engaged in an advocacy competition, and you can read more

about their advocacy efforts in the Student Column.

You, our members have been tirelessly advocating for your clients, your peers and your profession. Do let PSHA know how and what you have been advocating for and we can facilitate support for those efforts. Also, consider nominating yourself or your peers for our annual Amy S. Goldman advocacy award <https://psha.org/membership/1426-2/> so that these advocacy efforts can be recognized!

Pursue Professional Growth

PSHA's Annual Convention in Valley Forge in April was a huge success. Our vice president of Convention planning and program Mary Weidner, and the Convention Planning Committee put together a phenomenal program. We had high caliber, world class presenters sharing their expertise and experiences with our membership. Presentations and posters were all clinically focused and provided ideas and strategies that were applicable to practice. Our student representative Yesenia Santiago-Jimenez, with the assistance of Kristen West, put together an engaging student track that included a quiz bowl, student focused sessions and a student advocacy night, that included PSHA's lobbyist, Angie Amhurst, from the McNees Winter Group and Representative Melissa Shusterman, a visiting legislator. Special thanks to Amy Caye and others from Craven Management Associates for the behind the scenes work in pulling this Convention together that allows so many professionals and students in the state to pursue their professional growth.

A group of 20 leaders in our state completed PSHA's PLAN (PSHA Leadership Advocacy Network) Leadership Development Program this Spring. These individuals completed six webinars and engaged in team discussions

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President's Message

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regarding the content as it applies to leadership. We look forward to great contributions from these leaders in our professions: Reethee Anthony, Nancy Carlino, Erin Buckwalter, Dana Bittetti, Nicole Billak, Yvonne D'Uva Howard, Amy Derr, Isabella Fredo, Louise Keegan, Eveline Klein, Brittany Marcolini, Emily Mickle, Brooke Penrod, Mary (Beth) Phifer, Jennifer Tarle, Isabelle Snyder, Kathryn VanDyke Schmaus, Guanyu Wei, Grace Wright, Emma Zechman. Look out for opportunities to join our next PLAN leadership cohort!

PSHA is planning to continue our fall online offerings that will allow members to acquire continuing education from the comfort of their own home. Watch your email and our social media sites for additional information.

Build Strong Collaborative Relationships

All the aforementioned opportunities to advocate and engage in professional growth facilitate the development of collaborative relationships (e.g., participating in committees, attending continuing education events, applying for the leadership development program). Our executive board and members of Craven Management Associates recently participated in a strategic planning workshop with Eileen Crowe from ASHA to create a vision for PSHA's strategic plan over the next few years. Much of this plan involves creating connections and facilitating communication between our members. Additionally, our leadership (president, present elect, and past president) have represented the state at the Council of State Speech-Language Hearing Association Presidents conference meeting in November in New Orleans, Louisiana and in May in Richmond, Virginia, developing connections and collaborations with other state association presidents and representatives.

PSHA as an organization works with a number of ASHA representatives that significantly support the work that we do. Susan Adams at ASHA is the ASHA staff liaison for Pennsylvania.

Our State Education Advocacy Leader (SEAL), Hope Warner, provides leadership, guidance and support on topics related to the funding and delivery of services in school-based settings. Our State Advocates for Medicare Policy (StAMP), Joanne Wisely, provides leadership, guidance and support on topics related to coverage, reimbursement and the delivery of services under Medicare and our State Advocate for Reimbursement (STAR), Caterina Staltari, provides leadership, guidance and support on topics related to coverage, reimbursement and the delivery of services under state Medicaid programs and private payers. The ASHA Committee of Ambassadors members from PA are Kristen West (SLP) and Susan Snyder (AUD), who provide advocacy on and communication about the priorities of the association. All these representatives are in constant communication with our PSHA Executive Board about issues that are relevant and pertinent to our professions.

Finally, it is important to us that we recognize and acknowledge those members of our association who do all these things: engage in advocacy, pursue professional growth, and build strong collaborative relationships. See Page 6 for an update about our most recent awards and honors of our Association, and in the fall, consider nominating your colleagues that are excelling in these areas for next spring's awards.

Thank you for all you do for our professions,

Louise Keegan

Louise Keegan, PhD, CCC-SLP, BC-ANCDS
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.

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**.

Newly Elected PSHA Board Members

Congratulations to the following newly elected/re-elected PSHA Executive Board Members. Terms begin on July 1.

President-Elect: Erin Buckwalter, MS, CCC-SLP

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

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

Vice President for Publications (Editor): Monica Kaniamattam, PhD, CCC-SLP

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

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

Secretary: Abbey Antolic, MA, CF-SLP

Welcome also to our new **Vice President for Governmental Relations:** Tamara Sepe, MS, CCC-SLP, who will be completing the remainder of Erin Buckwalter's term as she moves into the president-elect position.

Government Relations Updates

Through the continued communication and support of the McNeese-Winter Group, PSHA receives up-to-the-minute news and developments on healthcare policy in Pennsylvania.

Here are a few highlights for the spring of 2023:

- Gov. Josh Shapiro was sworn into office on January 17, 2023.
- Gov. Shapiro gave his Budget Address to a joint session on March 7, 2023.
- In the PA State House, Democrats officially won a majority of seats, with a count of 102 Ds/101 Rs, following three special elections on February 7.
- In the PA legislature, Republicans have maintained control of the PA State Senate, with a 28-22 advantage in the 50-seat chamber.

Governor Shapiro's budget presentation included numerous funding suggestions for populations that your members work with, including:

- Invests an additional \$10.4 million into preschool early intervention services to better support children with developmental or social-emotional service needs.
- 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.
- 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 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 McNeese-Winter Group are monitoring or actively working on:

- Telemedicine. PSHA has been involved in stakeholder discussions with legislators on this session's version of the bill. We hope to see movement on it soon.
- ASLP-IC: Interstate Compact. PSHA and the State Board of State Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology continue to monitor the viability of the enactment of the compact in Pennsylvania.
- SB393 Educator certification and employment for immigrants in Pennsylvania. PSHA representatives and the lobbyist met with Senator Schwank's staff and gave feedback on proposed legislation
- HB342 Improving College Transition for Students with Disabilities. A letter of support was sent to Rep. Miller.
- HB 498 Early Screening for Autism. A letter of support was sent to Rep Smith. PSHA did request further review of language around the development of the screening tool and suggested that the screen receive input from an interprofessional team that includes speech-language pathologists.
- SB 514 Early Lead Screenings for Children. A letter of support was sent to Senator Baker.

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

Erin Buckwalter

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

Angie J.M. Armbrust

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

2023 PSHA Convention Wrap-Up

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the Convention in April! Sincerest thanks to everyone who attended, the Convention Planning Committee, PSHA Office and amazing speakers. I appreciate the helpful feedback from the Convention survey. Results were overwhelmingly positive relative to the registration process, number of ASHA CEUs available, sessions content and program. Most attendees reported an “excellent” overall experience. All comments and suggestions will be carefully considered planning future Conventions.

We are about to begin planning next year’s Convention, which will be held at the Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square. This is a perfect time to join the Convention Planning Committee to share your ideas on topics, speakers, theme and other details. The time investment is approximately one hour monthly (much of which is conducted via email). Please reach out and I will add you to the list – we would love to hear from you! mweidner@pennwest.edu.

In the meantime, mark your calendars for next year’s Convention for April 10-13, 2024! We will also be offering continuing education opportunities at the Fall event. Details will be forthcoming via email and social media.

Mary Weidner

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

Thank you to the following 2023 PSHA Convention sponsors:

- Student Reception: **Salus University**
- Refreshment Break Sponsors: **Therapy Network** and **PowerBack Rehabilitation**
- Session Sponsor: **NESHAP**

PSHA Convention – Pittsburgh April 10-13, 2024

Save the date for the 2024 PSHA Convention

April 10-13

Sheraton Pittsburgh Hotel at Station Square, Pittsburgh, PA



Please visit www.psha.org in the coming months for call for papers, pricing and registration information along with session information and more.

Look for an enhanced Student Track as well as specialty Schools, Health Care and Audiology tracks. Please consider submitting your presentation, professional or student poster or technical session for consideration for the Convention.

Read upcoming *InBrief* newsletters and follow PSHA social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) for updates. This year’s theme will be announced soon!

To make hotel reservations, call 610-354-81181-800-325-3535 and request a room in the PSHA Room Block.

Room Rate is \$179-Single. These rates are available until March 25, 2024 or until the room block sells out, whichever occurs first.

If you are interested in serving on the Convention Committee or if you have any questions, please contact the PSHA Office at psha@psha.org. We look forward to seeing you in Pittsburgh in 2024!

PSHA 2023 Honors and Awards

Honors of the Association



Congratulations to Cheryl Gunter, PhD, CCC-SLP (pictured left).

Rising Star Award

Congratulations to Brittany Marcolini.

2023 Appreciation of Service Awards



- Congratulations to Mary Fran Buczynski (pictured left).
- Thank you to all the members of the 2023 Convention Committee.

2023 PLAN Certificates

Congratulations to the following participants of the PSHA Leadership & Advocacy Network (PLAN). PLAN is a PSHA initiative to promote advocacy, leadership, mentorship and networking among those in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology. This initiative includes continuing education opportunities, as well as other programs and events that support collaborative engagement

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of students and professionals across the state.



- Reethee Antony
- Nicole Billak
- Dana Bitetti
- Erin Buckwalter
- Nancy Carlino
- Amy Derr
- Isabella Fredo
- Yvonne D'Uva Howard
- Louise Keegan
- Evelyn Klein
- Brittany Marcolini
- Emily Mickle
- Brooke Penrod
- Mary Phifer
- Kathryn VanDyke Schmaus
- Isabelle Snyder
- Jennifer Tarle
- Guanyu Wei
- Grace Wright
- Emma Zechman

2023 PSHA Life Members



Congratulations to the following PSHA members who have attained the age of 65 and have been a member for more than 15 consecutive years:

- Michele Cherewka
- Dawn Escott
- Sandra Falcone
- Lois Friedman
- Susan Hough
- Janis Jarecki-Liu
- Charlotte Molrine
- Patrick M. Murphy (pictured middle)
- Elaine Shuey
- Randy Von Drach (pictured right)

Von Drach Memorial Scholarship



Congratulations to Rebecca Stroschein (pictured right) from Penn State University, the winner of the 2023 Von Drach Memorial Scholarship.

NSSHLA Chapter Honors

Marywood University Chapter

Outgoing Board Members



Thank you to the following members of the PSHA Executive Board who will be leaving the board this year:

- Nancy Carlino (pictured)
- Anne Gilbertson (pictured)
- Skye Lewis
- Erin Lundblom

Visit www.psha.org to read descriptions of all of the awards. Know someone who deserves to be honored? Nominate someone for next year's awards by February 15, 2024.

PSHA Health Care-Telepractice Committee Report

Welcome back from the 2023 PSHA Convention! Those attending would agree that this year's presentations certainly offered a plethora of considerations on how speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists (AUDs) might revolutionize their current practices. Hopefully, while there, you were able to join in the presentation shared by the Health Care – Telepractice Committee on *Trends in Telepractice*, the results of a 10-question survey sent out to PSHA members early last summer. If not, this article will share some highlights of the survey results and presentation.

• Telehealth/telemedicine:

Generic term used for the provision of health services over a telecommunications network. Telemedicine is often used by physicians.

• Telepractice:

Used commonly in the field of SLP

• Teletherapy:

Specific to intervention aspect of the practice

Source: Trends in Telepractice

The aim of this survey was to collect information on telepractice trends from SLPs practicing in Pennsylvania. Surprisingly, not much interest was gained in the release of the survey, as only 27 members participated. However, the majority of respondents claimed employment within the school setting (see breakdown below).

As you'll likely recall, the pandemic resulted in a multitude of virtual connections across health care, business and educational sectors, but then experienced a decline upon returning to in-person settings. The results of this survey revealed that 28 percent of SLPs reported using teletherapy before the pandemic, which then surged to 96 percent during the pandemic. Additionally, 92 percent recommended the continued use of teletherapy as a method of service

delivery afterward. Interestingly, participants noted several benefits with telepractice from both the professional as well as the clientele perspectives. Those telepractice gains included parent participation, availability of services during closures, professionals working from home, accessible services for

underserved clients, the emergence of new service delivery models, observation of children within natural environments such as the home or community, and the improved attention of children who enjoy interacting with screens (see word cloud below).



Source: Trends in Telepractice

Survey participants also shared challenges with Telepractice that included connectivity issues, client attention, attendance, deciphering intelligibility within virtual environments, assessment barriers such as resource fidelity within the virtual setting, and increased potential for environmental distractors (see word cloud below).



Source: Trends in Telepractice

We are hopeful that the results of the survey aid in our professional understanding of telepractice applications along with providing recommendations for those who are interested. However, with such limited participation in the survey, we might wonder if there continues to be any ongoing interest for telepractice to continue within the field. It's important for us to

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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Schools	56.00%
Early Intervention	12.00%
Private Practice	20.00%
Clinic	12.00%
SNF	0.00%
Hospital	0.00%
University Clinics	20.00%
Other	Responses 4.00%

Source: Trends in Telepractice

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Source: ASHA Advocacy Flyer

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- Check your email for an *InBrief* update from your Pennsylvania SEAL (State Education Advocacy Leader), Hope Warner.**



Marywood University's NSSLHA Chapter has had a wonderful year full of social gatherings, advocating for issues within our field, and spreading kindness through various forms of community service. We are so thankful for all of the participation we received from students, faculty and friends of the department.

Our first social gathering event of the Fall 2022 semester was a welcome back party for students within the department. We ordered pizza and had a number of giant sized games that we played as a group. It was fun to connect with first-year students who are just starting in the program as well as see familiar faces from the other cohorts. On a sunny day in October, we hosted a pumpkin painting in a park down the street from campus. Our chapter also hosted a Trunk-or-Treat for the clients of Marywood's Speech-Language Clinic. The children had a fun time collecting candy and seeing everyone, many of whom were their clinicians and supervisors, dressed up in costumes. To end the fall semester, we had a holiday-themed Kahoot trivia afternoon which created a fun competition among our members and faculty.

In terms of advocacy, our members sent emails to legislators advocating for communication and hearing-related disorders on Advocacy Day. We are honored that our infographic regarding Diversity in the Workplace won "Most Potential for Largest Impact" for the 2022 PSHA Student Advocacy Campaign last spring.

In March we made educational posts regarding Down Syndrome and Traumatic Brain Injuries, as March

is Brain Injury Awareness month and March 21 is World Down Syndrome Day. Our chapter spread awareness by wearing blue on March 1, and crazy socks on March 21.



Walk to End Alzheimer's participants.

Marywood's NSSLHA chapter was fortunate to be involved in many community service projects. Starting with the Walk to End Alzheimer's, about 20 of our members walked a combined total of 45 miles around our campus to raise awareness for Alzheimer's disease and to show our support for those currently affected by its negative impacts. We raised a total of \$1,100 for the Alzheimer's Association to further research and to support this amazing cause.



NSSLHA officers with some of the cards and gifts collected through the giving tree.

Around the holidays, we participated in Marywood's Giving Tree Project by donating gifts that were sent to individuals, of all ages

in need, throughout the community as well as writing more than 100 holiday cards to local hospital staff and residents. It was wonderful to see our members spreading love and kindness during a time that can be so difficult for some. We started the spring 2023 semester off with an infant/child clothing drive in coordination with Campus Ministry and collected various items from students and staff within the department. At the beginning of February, we sent more than 100 virtual Valentine's Day cards to children at St. Jude's Children's Hospital, and we are looking forward to getting involved in more service events soon! Our next service event is in April where we will be participating in Marywood University's Out of the Darkness Walk to spread awareness for suicide prevention.



A compilation of the different cards and messages that were sent to the children at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

We are thankful for the opportunities that this 2022-2023 academic year has brought us, and we cannot wait to see what the rest of this semester as well as the next semester brings!

Student Voice

The Student Advocacy Competition, an annual event hosted by the Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association (PSHA), encourages awareness and education about crucial issues within the CSD professions. This year, NSSLHA chapters from schools across Pennsylvania had the opportunity to win prizes by organizing and attending events in the community, promoting a credible and creative social media campaign and engaging in impactful advocacy efforts. These efforts range from community service to advocacy work, with students volunteering their time and resources towards promoting these issues.

At the end of the competition, Pennsylvania Western University Edinboro was awarded for the largest number of advocacy events, Marywood University for the most impactful video and Moravian

University for the most credible and creative video. Thiel College was also awarded the PSHA Student Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award for their exemplary advocacy work.

The event also featured a Q&A session with PSHA lobbyist Angie Armbrust and State Representative for Pennsylvania's 157th District, Melissa Shusterman. They discussed the importance of involvement in state organizations to advocate for legislative changes, the elements of an impactful letter and how lobbying can help remove barriers to access for marginalized groups and individuals.

Other PSHA student events included a student panel comprising of second-year graduate students and clinical fellows, who shared their personal and professional experiences to provide a foundation for future SLPs. Additionally, Ryan

Hollister from Salus University led a Professional Writing presentation, and students participated in a Trivia Bowl where Pennsylvania Western University Edinboro won the coveted golden speech banana.

Overall, the Student Advocacy Competition served as a platform for students to advocate for crucial issues within the CSD profession and learn from experienced professionals in the field. Congratulations to all the winners and participants for all their hard work and dedication towards raising awareness and promoting change.

Instagram: @PSHAstudents
Facebook: PSHA Students
Email: pshastudents@gmail.com

Yesenia Santiago-Jimenez

Yesenia Santiago-Jimenez, MS, CF-SLP
PSHA Student Representative

PSHA Schools Committee Report

The PSHA Schools Committee meets virtually every four to six weeks as a large group with members meeting in smaller work groups throughout the year. The committee meets to discuss legislation and advocacy efforts, concerns that have arisen and make recommendations and provide resources for school-based concerns. The committee consists of speech-language pathologists working in early intervention and school settings, graduate students in speech-language pathology, higher education representatives and administrators in educational settings from across the state.

Interested in getting involved?

Please complete the following form and a committee member will contact you. <https://tinyurl.com/2a2ev69b>.

Over the course of the year, the committee has focused on strategic goals. Each is shared below with current progress.

Target: Advocacy Efforts

Goal 1: Create a quarterly member spotlight through social media.

Progress: The schools committee created a member spotlight on social media with plans to continue throughout the year.

Goal 2: Create an advocacy toolkit to help individual SLPs who need support in advocating at the local level.

Progress: The toolkit is complete and accessible using the link below.

<https://psha.org/school-based-resource-toolkit/>

Target: Composition and Diversity of Committee

Goal 1: Increase membership to cover half of Pennsylvania Intermediate Unit regions.

Progress: Of course, SLPs love to meet and exceed expectations! We started the year with representatives

from 13 Intermediate Units and now have 19 Intermediate Units represented.

Action Item: We are still looking for members from the following Intermediate Unit areas: 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 27 and 29. SLPs who reside within the IU area are encouraged to join even if your employer is not the Intermediate Unit.

Target: Caseload and Workload Models

Goal 1: Create and share information about caseload and workload models used in other locations with members to highlight strengths and obstacles.

Progress: The group is working to create a resource guide regarding the roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists to assist school administrators.

Greetings From Your StAMP Representative

Opportunities and Challenges



During the May StAMP meeting, there were two important discussions. One discussion focused on member awareness of ASHA's Public Policy Agenda. This discussion ended with an easy and actionable ask to share information. The ASHA website for the 2023 Public Policy Agenda is posted and there is information for members to know about what currently does or what will have an impact on our professional practices. I encourage all PSHA members to go to the site and carefully review the information being addressed. Please seek additional information regarding the areas that will impact your practice. The ASHA 2023 Public Policy Agenda can be accessed here: <https://www.asha.org/advocacy/2023-asha-public-policy-agenda/>

Another important and longer discussion was about the need for practitioners to understand that documentation and coding information must align with the professional services being provided. As Medicare and many other insurers continue to ramp up documentation and coding requirements to qualify for payment, professional clinicians need to ensure electronic medical records and electronic health records accurately capture our services.

This discussion presented several practice considerations and concerns. Too often colleagues admit to not being comfortable selecting diagnosis codes for the medical record or CPT codes for billing. As I shared during the PSHA convention presentation, we have become victims of our own data. The American healthcare service cycle is a circular process that uses clinician provided clinical and billing information to create the next level of laws, regulations and policies for the services we provide. If we don't like what we are being told, we need to break the cycle. This requires knowledge of and comfort with the coding we use for the services we provide. 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. This can, and often does, result in a denial of payment for the SLP services.

CPT Codes for billing services are another important piece of the healthcare process. Each year, ASHA provides a summary

regarding the CPT codes available for use by SLPs and audiologists. The 2023 SLP version may be accessed here: <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/reimbursement/2023-medicare-fee-schedule-for-slps.pdf>. During discussion, the StAMPs identified that CPT code 97140 (Manual Therapy) is not included in the ASHA summary. Some of the state representatives have been told that this code can't be used by SLPs. The StAMPs did some research to reveal that there is nothing in the CMS Correct Coding Initiative or in the CPT descriptor (definition of the services allowed under this code) to indicate the code cannot be used by SLPs. As noted above, we have a responsibility to accurately code the services we are providing. SLPs treating patients with dysphagia and associated lymphedema (often due to head and/or neck cancer) may be able to use this code in conjunction with the dysphagia treatment code (CPT 92526) when properly trained to use the technique and the service is considered clinically appropriate for the patient. As a result, the StAMPs have asked to have CPT 97140 included in the ASHA 2024 fee schedule summary.

Please make use of the ASHA resources available to you to facilitate accurate coding for the services you provide. Also, please be certain to know the ASHA Public Policy Agenda and to become active in the efforts to support your practice.

Joanne M. Wisely

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

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A child's drawing on a piece of paper. In the center is a house with a brown roof, yellow walls, and a chimney. To the left of the house is a small tree with a green trunk and yellow leaves. To the right of the house is a yellow car with a black wheel. The entire scene is enclosed within a large, irregular, multi-colored outline that resembles a cloud or a bubble, with colors including blue, green, yellow, and red. The drawing is done in a simple, illustrative style.