

[Date]

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Address]

[City, State Zip]

RE: Request Permanent Extension of Telehealth Services

Dear Medical Director:

On behalf of the [Insert State Association Name], I request that your health plan permanently extend coverage of telehealth services provided by audiologists and speech-language pathologists while states take steps to reopen during the pandemic. Ensuring continuity of medically necessary care related to audiology and speech-language pathology is critical to preventing a negative impact on patient function and outcomes.

[Insert State Association Name] [Enter boilerplate language about your state association's mission and the number of members you represent and/or the number of clients you serve] Audiologists are experts in providing services for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing, balance, and tinnitus disorders for people of all ages. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are experts in assessing, diagnosing, and treating speech-language disorders, swallowing deficits, and cognitive impairments.

Telehealth will expand the availability of providers to those in need—regardless of geographic location, mobility challenges, or social distancing mandates—saving critical time and resources. [OPTIONAL: Insert any relevant information from providing telehealth to patients including any positive feedback. Mention if patient compliance and outcomes improved, for example. What do you want the Medical Director to know about why it is important to permanently extend telehealth coverage?] In addition, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is fielding a telehealth survey to members and patients who receive audiology and speech-language pathology services. I am happy to share the details of those survey results with you when they become available.

As the pandemic continues, minimizing the spread of COVID-19 remains critical and each stakeholder must do what they can to help reduce the risk of exposure. The demonstrated effectiveness of telehealth speaks to the value of **permanently extending telehealth coverage for all clinically appropriate services**. A recent study from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, including speech-language pathology services, demonstrated that 86% of patients and caregivers were interested in continuing to receive future care via telehealth.¹ The clinical teams involved found telehealth to be clinically appropriate and effective 93% of the time.²

Research demonstrates the efficacy of telehealth and its equivalent quality as compared to in-person service delivery for a wide range of diagnostic and treatment procedures for adults and children.³ Studies have shown high levels of patient, clinician, and parent satisfaction supporting telehealth as an effective alternative to the in-person model for delivery of care.⁴ This reinforces that only clinically appropriate delivery or use of telehealth by audiologists and SLPs must be equivalent to the quality of services provided in person in order to remain in compliance with ASHA's Code of Ethics.⁵

Due to a lack of uniform health plan coverage and reimbursement, telehealth remains underutilized across many health care professions, including audiology and speech-language pathology. I urge you to provide your subscribed members ongoing and permanent access to telehealth services provided by audiologists and SLPs.

To support implementation, ASHA has developed a collection of professional practice resources including the attached recommended guidance for implementing telehealth coverage for audiology and speech-language pathology services. The guidance includes recommended codes, modifiers, place of service codes, and clinical vignettes to describe examples of clinically appropriate telehealth services.

Thank you for considering [Insert State Association Name]'s request to permanently extend access to telehealth services provided by audiologists and SLPs. I appreciate the opportunity to share comments on this important topic. Please contact [State Association Contact] at [Phone Number] or [e-mail] if you require additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

[Insert State Association President's Name]
[Insert State Association Name] President

Attachment:

[ASHA Recommendations for Telehealth Coverage](#) [PDF]

¹ Rametta, S. C., et al. (2020). *Analyzing 2,589 child neurology telehealth encounters necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Neurology*. 10.1212. <https://n.neurology.org/content/early/2020/06/09/WNL.000000000010010>.

² Ibid.

³ Grogan-Johnson, S., Alvares, R., Rowan, L., & Creaghead, N. (2010). A pilot study comparing the effectiveness of speech language therapy provided by telemedicine with conventional on-site therapy. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, 16, 134–139.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2016). *Code of Ethics*. <https://www.asha.org/Code-of-Ethics/>.