

Date

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request consideration of policy changes to ensure that audiology and speech-language pathology evaluation and therapy services provided via telehealth are recognized as reimbursable services for your healthcare plan beneficiaries. Due to the COVID-19 crisis quarantine procedures, individuals with medical conditions, including the elderly and individuals with disabilities are unable to receive medically necessary evaluation and treatment services from audiologists and speech-language pathologists through on-site clinical visits.

Multiple studies in peer-reviewed journals demonstrate the effectiveness of audiology and speech-language pathology services delivered via telepractice.

<https://www.asha.org/EvidenceMapLanding.aspx?id=8589944872&recentarticles=false&year=undefined&tab=all> By providing coverage for these services, you will ensure that individuals with hearing, balance, communication, cognitive, and feeding/swallowing impairments will continue to receive the services they need to increase their functional abilities and their independence. Lack of coverage for medically necessary audiology and speech-language pathology evaluation services may result in loss of function and the need for higher-cost services including inpatient hospitalization, long-term care placement, non-oral means of nutrition and hydration, and other services.

Policies that will enable individuals with communication, cognitive, and feeding/swallowing disorders to access clinically appropriate, high-quality services provided via telehealth are needed. Especially during this time when efforts are focused on limiting the spread of COVID_19, it is necessary for older adults and those with underlying health conditions to have immediate access to audiology and speech-language pathology services provided via telehealth.

I respectfully request that you consider enacting policies that will provide for reimbursement of medically necessary hearing and balance services provided by licensed audiologists and speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive services provided by licensed speech-language pathologists in SD.

We appreciate your consideration of our request as we all work to ensure that all individuals with communication and swallowing disorders receive the care needed during this unprecedented time. Please contact me at _____ for more information if needed.

Sincerely,