

[Date]

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Address]

[City, State Zip]

RE: Request Permanent Extension of Telehealth Services

Dear Medical Director:

I write, as a participating provider, to request that your health plan permanently extend coverage of telehealth services provided by audiologists and speech-language pathologists while states take steps to re-open 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.

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 my availability to those in need—regardless of geographic location, mobility challenges, or even the state of quarantine or social distancing—saving critical time and resources. *[OPTIONAL: Insert personal experience from providing telehealth to patients including any positive feedback you received from patients. Mention if patient compliance and outcomes have 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 my request to permanently extend access to telehealth services provided by audiologists and SLPs. I appreciate the opportunity to share my comments on this important topic.

If you require additional information or clarification, I may be reached at [phone number] or [e-mail].

Sincerely,

[Your Name, CCC-A/CCC-SLP]
[Place of employment]

Attachment:
ASHA Recommendations for Telehealth Coverage

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

² Ibid.

³ Grogan-Johnson, S., Alvares, R., Rowan, L., & Craghead, 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*. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/Code-of-Ethics/>.