[Date]

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Address]

[City, State Zip]

RE: Permanently Extend Coverage of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Telehealth Services

Dear Medical Director:

As a current practicing [audiologist/speech-language pathologist] in the state of [state] and a credentialed provider with [health plan organization], I write to thank you for extending telehealth coverage during the public health emergency (PHE) and request a permanent extension to the coverage of telehealth services provided by audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs). Ensuring continuity of medically necessary care related to audiology and skilled therapy services is critical to the prevention of any negative impact on patient function and outcomes.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has encouraged health plans to cover a robust variety of telehealth services. Since plans have broad flexibility to cover telehealth through their payment policies, it is in the best interest of beneficiaries to receive the telehealth services that are shown to increase continuity of care, extend access to care beyond normal hours, help overcome provider shortages, and reduce patient travel burden, among other benefits.[[1]](#endnote-2) Despite these proven benefits of telehealth, it remains underutilized because of barriers that have hindered the realization of its full capabilities, particularly laws that present a mixture of accepted and non-eligible services.[[2]](#endnote-3)

On April 1, 2021, CMS reiterated its commitment to covering telehealth by adding 24 additional codes for audiology and speech-language pathology to the list of authorized Medicare telehealth services for use during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. This expansion of available reimbursable codes shows CMS’s continued support for telehealth delivery of audiology and speech-language pathology services during a time when in-person services continue to pose a risk to vulnerable patients due to the ongoing PHE.

I ask that [health plan organization] adopt this complete code set now and **permanently extend telehealth coverage for all clinically appropriate services**. Studies have shown that telehealth has been an effective modality for service delivery of audiology and speech-language pathology across the age spectrum.[[3]](#endnote-4), [[4]](#endnote-5)

To support and promote permanent implementation for payers, the leading membership organization for audiologists and SLPs, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), has developed a collection of professional practice resources, including recommended guidance for implementing telehealth coverage for audiology and speech-language pathology services.[[5]](#endnote-6) The guidance includes all recommended codes, modifiers, place of service codes, and clinical vignettes to describe examples of clinically appropriate telehealth services. The guidance may be found on ASHA’s website at <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedFiles/ASHA-Recommendations-for-Telepractice-Coverage.pdf>.

Thank you for considering my request to permanently extend comprehensive coverage of audiology and speech-language pathology telehealth services for beneficiaries. Continued access to telehealth services will positively impact the patients I treat as well as the patients my colleagues treat so that we can strive as a community to offer top notch, patient centered care while maintaining a standard of positive patient outcomes to help patients achieve their goals for a better quality of life. For additional information or clarification, please contact [contact name] at [contact phone number] or [contact email].

Sincerely,

[Your name], [certification]

1. Department of Health and Human Services (2021). *Telehealth for Providers: What You Need to Know.* <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/telehealth-toolkit-providers.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Turner Lee, N., Karsten, J., and Roberts, J. (2020). *Removing regulatory barriers to telehealth before and after COVID-19*. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/removing-regulatory-barriers-to-telehealth-before-and-after-covid-19/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Grogan-Johnson, S., Gabel, R., Taylor, J., Rowan, L., Alvares, R., & Schenker, J. (2011). A Pilot Exploration of Speech Sound Disorder Intervention Delivered by Telehealth to School–Age Children. *International Journal of Telerehabilitation.* 3(1): 31-42. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4296798/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Tindall, L. (2012) The Use of Telepractice Technology to Provide Speech and Language Services to Persons Aging with Communication Disorders. *Perspectives on Gerontology*. <https://pubs.asha.org/doi/full/10.1044/gero17.3.94>. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). ASHA Recommendations for Telehealth Coverage of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Services. <https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedFiles/ASHA-Recommendations-for-Telepractice-Coverage.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)