

SCSHA Advocacy Report: 2021

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Vice President of Government Affairs

VPGA Report, May 2021 In Touch Newsletter

Vice President of Government Affairs

This year, Adrienne Davis, the outgoing VP of Government Affairs has been instrumental in discussing and carrying over SCSHA goals with Kelly Caldwell, the incoming VP. We strategized and focused our efforts to advocate for changes in legislation and policy. Our major agenda items include SC Babynet, SC Medicaid, The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact, the ABA licensure bill, and legislation on telehealth.



SCSHA and the State House ... and SC DHHS

One of the ongoing issues from the previous VP's term was to continue efforts to improve SC Babynet. A much larger issue was discovered with the SC Medicaid policy manuals and SLP and Audiology Fee Schedule. These very important documents did not match clinical practice across *all* levels of care, which was surprising.

Doing the Work...

The only codes covered in the SC Medicaid SLP fee schedule up until April 15, 2021 include: S9152, 92507, 92507-GT, 92508, 92521, 92522, 92523, 92524, 92526, 92607, 92608, and 92609. The reimbursement for 92507 and 92508 was listed as a timed code in the manual, which is not consistent with the code descriptors in the American Medical Association Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) manual or the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) for these codes. Oddly enough, our swallowing evaluation codes (92610 and 92611) were included in the Audiology list, and the Midwifery list; and outpatient hospital services did not include many codes such as 92612 (FEES). If you are routinely involved with billing these codes, you may already realize that Speech-Language Pathology codes are far from complete, and may limit SC Medicaid patients from accessing our full scope of practice. We also found out from VP of Audiology Dakota Sharp, that the Audiology code list was missing several codes which were actually being paid through the MMIS claims system.

Digging Deeper...

Patients who need Speech Pathology services for AAC, tracheostomy, and laryngectomy require durable medical equipment (DME). There is a short list of HCPCS level 2 codes on ASHA's website that was a good starting point to look for what codes are covered or not covered by SC Medicaid. Out of this list, several codes were not listed in the fee schedule for SC Medicaid. There are additional codes specific to laryngectomy care (such as adhesive remover wipes, skin prep wipes, base plates, etc.) that are not listed on the ASHA

webpage or in the SC Medicaid DME fee schedule. The code for a provider-placed TEP voice prosthesis (L8509) was changed in CMS from DME to a part B code in 2010, however, this code was nowhere to be found in any of the fee schedules.

After significant time spent to discover the above issues, policy manuals, Medicaid bulletins, and historical changes in our fee schedule, there were many inconsistencies and found that needed to be discussed. We determined that our best approach would be to ask SC Department of Health and Human Services for a meeting and submit our initial requests for changes to the fee schedule as well as the policy manuals.

Advocate for
a Meeting

**SCSHA Meeting
with SC DHHS
April 23, 2010**

The meeting took place virtually on April 23, 2021 with Kelly Caldwell and Wanda Crotwell (our lobbyist), Jennifer Buster, the Director of IDEA/Part C, and Kevin Bonds, the Director of Health Policy and Hospital Policy Lead. Our biggest goals for the meeting were to advocate for necessary changes in the fee schedule and policy manuals, and to advocate for an ongoing relationship to advocate for future changes. Since the VP of Government Affairs is involved in legislative and policy changes that affect our professions and patient access to care in South Carolina, this was spearheaded by Kelly with a joint advocacy effort from multiple members of the SCSHA executive board. The meeting was also attended and supported by Stephen Kneece (President), Allison McGee (President-Elect), Adrienne Davis (President-Elect-Elect), Brianna Miluk (VP of Clinical and Professional Affairs), and Michelle Dawson (Past President and Past VP of Government Affairs).

**Good
News!**

The good news: Mr. Bonds and Ms. Buster both stated that they would work with SCSHA to fix the technical issues above, including correcting an exclusion on co-treatment for BabyNet providers. Mr. Bonds agreed that once the untimed codes were corrected for 92507 and 92508 to match CMS policy, the reimbursement needed to reflect four times the previous 15-minute reimbursement rate which had been discussed by Adrienne Davis and Michelle Dawson with the previous SCDHHS Director Joshua Baker. Changes will be published for our membership once the manuals and fee schedules are updated so that everyone can be prepared to modify their billing to a single unit per date of service. We will make sure all members are aware of the date that this change is made with an email, post on our website, and we will ask SC DHHS to prepare a memo.

Another thing we learned is that Mr. Bonds is working diligently to update our code lists and welcomed our input. He is spearheading the efforts to transition MMIS, a 40-year-old system with some quirks and problems, to a brand new system. This process will ultimately improve our access to all of the relevant billing codes. Mr. Bonds also suggested that we meet again to discuss issues specifically relevant to school SLP and Audiology services, as well as Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) issues.

What's
Next?

Last, but certainly not least, Kelly has been working virtually with Brianna Miluk, our new VP of Clinical and Professional Affairs, to understand what problems exist with SC BabyNet as well as professional service reimbursement issues in our state. We are hopeful to collaborate with stakeholders across South Carolina in

SCSHA
Collaboration

coming months and years to advocate for improvements to Babynet that will improve access to skilled services.

More information is coming!

**Coming Soon:
Legislative and
Policy Review**

The Annual SCSHA Legislative and Policy Review is under construction and will be distributed to SCSHA members in June – so watch your email or the “members only” section of the SCSHA website in the next month to learn more about our efforts at the South Carolina State House as well as advocacy with our state government services.

SCSHA Advocacy: The Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact



ASHA has done a superb job of helping SCSHA advocate for and against bills that affect SLP and Audiology professional practice. In April, we asked our members to contact members of the House 3M committee to ask for the bill to be scheduled for a hearing. Our legislators need to know that this bill matters to SLPs, Audiologists, and our current and future patients. I asked our lobbyist to get the bill sponsored and introduced in the SC Senate while we wait on the House to pass the bill.



Where is the Bill now?

House bill 3840 is currently in committee: The House Medical, Military, Municipal and Public Affairs Committee (“House 3M”).

Sponsors of H. 3840:

Rep. Shannon Erickson (R)
(primary sponsor)
Rep. William Herbkersman(R)
Rep. Jeffrey Bradley(R)
Rep. Weston Newton(R)
Rep. Christopher Wooten(R)
Rep. Micajah Caskey(R)
Rep. Bobby Cox(R)

April 10: Crossover deadline. Bills must be passed by the house before this deadline for them to make it to the SC state senate in 2021.

May 13: Adjourn for 2021

Summer 2021: Interstate Compact Organizational Meeting for participating states.

January 2022: Legislative Term Resumes. Ends June 15, 2022.

You can check the status of H.3840 anytime on the SC State House Website. <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php>

Updates from the Vice President of Government Affairs

April/May 2021:

- The crossover deadline went by and the interstate compact bill (H 3840) is still in the House 3M committee. Rep. Bart Blackwell (Aiken County) signed on as a co-sponsor on April 27th.
- We had a subcommittee meeting scheduled for May 4, 2021 and prepared to speak on several bills (H 3840 and H 3731 / S 630). Due to scheduling conflicts, the meeting was canceled.
- Medicare cuts were supposed to increase in April but thankfully the cuts were postponed with passage of H.R 1868 on April 13.
- Wellcare is a managed care organization for SC Medicaid and stopped providing services in South Carolina at the end of March. Patients with Wellcare were transitioned automatically to Absolute Total Care as of April 1.
- Prior Authorization from Kepro for SC Babynet was eliminated as of a SC DHHS bulletin issued 4/8/2021.
- ASHA Virtual advocacy day was May 12! Several of SCSHA's members sent messages using ASHA's advocacy website. Thank you!

June 2021:

- Legislative session was adjourned for 2021. The SC Senate continued in a "Sine Die" session for the purposes of working on the state budget over the summer and have now adjourned.
- SC DHHS published a bulletin informing providers about PERM audits (payment error rate measurement), which means that an outside agency will be auditing Medicaid and CHIP payments from July 1 through June 30, 2022. The PERM audits occur once every three years. What do providers need to do?
 - Read the full bulletin on SC DHHS website with any questions you have about the PERM audits
 - Review existing documentation requirements in the Medicaid bulletins for your setting- Home health, Hospital services, LEA manual, physician services provider manual, private rehab therapy manual, and SC Medicaid policies and procedures manual.
- We were informed that Aegis therapies may be asking SLPs to cross-train Occupational therapists in dysphagia evaluation and treatment. Kelly contacted our healthcare representatives at ASHA who immediately started working on this issue. Clinicians who are concerned about this program, especially those working for Aegis therapies, should reach out directly to Monica Sampson, Director of Health Care Services for Speech-Language Pathology at ASHA.

- As of June 7 2021, all emergency executive orders pertaining to the public health emergency (PHE) in South Carolina expired and will not be renewed. There were no members that contacted SCSHA with concerns about discontinuations of allowances during the PHE. As far as we know, telehealth for Medicaid beneficiaries will continue until the end of the federal PHE unless we are otherwise informed by SC DHHS.

July 2021:

- Proposed rules for Medicare reimbursement were posted on July 15 and are available for public comment. ASHA is advocating on behalf of our profession. The full 7% cut for January 2022 will likely take effect if the rule is not changed by September 2021. This represents an additional 3.75% cut from what we already experienced in January 2021. You can find more information on ASHA Advocacy webpages and emails to the membership.
- SCSHA announced committee sign-ups! Please volunteer with the committee that fits your expertise by August 15th for the initial committee meetings. If you can't join right away, don't worry – sign up when you can!

AAC Issue:

- At some point in the first half of 2021, Kepro stopped authorizing out-of-state DME providers. SCSHA and our lobbyist worked directly with SC DHHS to find out if there was a policy change.
- The disruption in prior approvals for AAC resulted in delays in care from SLPs attempting to obtain speech-generating devices from AAC durable medical equipment companies thru SC Medicaid.
- Since there was no policy change, SCSHA advocated for existing policy to be followed. Current policy allows for a “sole source provider” who is based out-of-state to be a DME provider in the SC Medicaid program.
- We have been informed that these devices are being approved again through the usual methods. If you have trouble with AAC requests being administratively denied, please work with the DME company to ensure that they are following all of the requirements for the funding packet paperwork. If they have not contacted Kepro directly, please ask them to contact the provider services representative at Kepro at (855) 326-5219.
- If you are still having trouble getting funding packets through the approval process with Kepro, you can contact Jeremy Faulkenburg at SC DHS: Jeremy.faulkenburg@scdhhs.gov.

Where are we on CPT code advocacy and reimbursement with SC Medicaid?

Making changes within the Medicaid program is a lengthy process. We have a team of SC DHHS employees as well as deputy directors who are working on the code changes that were discussed at our meeting in April. Because we found so many codes missing or needed edits, and it will impact the budget for SC Medicaid, the process is taking much longer than expected.

There are several SCSHA members assisting the Vice President of Government Affairs with this issue and other problems related to patient access to services in the Medicaid program. If you

haven't jumped in to help SCSHA on a content-specific committee, please consider joining the legislative affairs committee! It is taking an army of people who are well-versed in regulatory information and professional practice standards to put together our advocacy efforts. I appreciate all of you and thank you for being available at a moment's notice to help answer questions related to regulations and clinical practice!

2021 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

Our lobbyist, Wanda, has been working with us constantly to ensure that she is advocating for us on the issues we have identified as our main concerns. Usually this means that when the weekly legislative reports are sent to the SCSHA President and Vice President of Government Affairs, those reports are read and we follow up with Wanda on any specific bills we would like to advocate for, or monitor.

Below are the bills we are monitoring and/or providing advocacy. ASHA has assisted us with these where it is indicated.

Audiology and Speech Language Pathology Interstate Compact (H 3840)

The Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact (ASLP-IC) facilitates the interstate practice of audiology and speech-language pathology while maintaining public protection.

Date of introduction in the House: 2/9/2021

Status: In Committee

Full text of the bill:

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/3840.htm

Summary: H 3840 General Bill, By [Erickson](#), [Herbkersman](#), [Bradley](#), [W. Newton](#), [Wooten](#), [Caskey](#) and [B. Cox](#)

A BILL TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 3 TO CHAPTER 67, TITLE 40 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE "AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE INTERSTATE COMPACT ACT", TO STATE THE PURPOSE OF THE ACT, TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS, TO OUTLINE STATE PARTICIPATION, TO OUTLINE PRIVILEGES FOR AUDIOLOGISTS AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS RESULTING FROM THE COMPACT, TO ALLOW FOR THE PRACTICE OF TELEHEALTH, TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR SPOUSES, TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM FOR TAKING ADVERSE ACTIONS AGAINST LICENSEES, TO ESTABLISH THE "AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY COMPACT COMMISSION", TO

ESTABLISH A DATA SYSTEM, TO OUTLINE THE RULEMAKING PROCESS, TO ADDRESS OVERSIGHT, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, AND ENFORCEMENT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, TO ESTABLISH THE DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, RULES, WITHDRAWAL, AND AMENDMENT, TO ADDRESS STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION, SEVERABILITY, AND BINDING EFFECT OF THE COMPACT; AND TO DESIGNATE THE EXISTING SECTIONS OF CHAPTER 67, TITLE 40 AS ARTICLE 1, ENTITLED "GENERAL PROVISIONS".

You can find more about the Interstate Compact at <https://aslpcompact.com/>.

What has SCSHA done to advocate for this bill? Starting April 15, we issued a call for SCSHA Members to contact members of the house committee on medical affairs (3M) with hopes that we can get the bill scheduled for a hearing, and hopefully pass the house, before the end of term on May 13. A hearing was tentatively scheduled for May 4, 2021 along with several other bills, to start 30 minutes after the full house adjourned. Unfortunately, the house was in session well past 4pm and was not able to have the committee meeting that day. We are currently waiting on a hearing to be re-scheduled in January 2022. As we work on securing votes for this bill, SCSHA will be in touch with our membership to ask for help, because advocacy takes *all* of us!

Behavior Analyst Licensing (H 3731, S 630)

A licensing process has been proposed for behavior analysts in South Carolina. They currently practice in our state by obtaining a credential through each insurance provider individually and maintaining those credentialing requirements.

Date of introduction in the house: 1/27/2021 (H 3731)

Date of introduction in the senate: 3/2/2021 (S 630)

Status: In Committee **Full text of the bill:**

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/3731.htm

Summary: H 3731 General Bill,

By [Erickson](#), [Ballentine](#), [Elliott](#), [Bradley](#), [Rose](#), [Thayer](#), [Trantham](#), [Bennett](#), [Caskey](#), [Taylor](#), [Allison](#), [Burns](#), [Bannister](#), [Dillard](#), [Herbkersman](#), [Hixon](#), [Kimmons](#), [Hyde](#), [Carter](#) and [M.M. Smith](#)

Similar ([S 0630](#))

A BILL TO AMEND SECTION 40-75-5, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, SECTION 40-75-10, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-20, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-30, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-110, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-190, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-200, SECTION 40-75-220, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-250, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-260, AS AMENDED, SECTION 40-75-285, AS AMENDED, ALL RELATING TO THE REGULATION OF LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, ADDICTION COUNSELORS, AND PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE REGULATION OF BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS AND ASSISTANT BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS, AND TO MAKE MISCELLANEOUS AND CONFORMING CHANGES; TO REDESIGNATE CHAPTER 75, TITLE 40 AS "PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS, AND LICENSED PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS", AND TO REDESIGNATE ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 75, TITLE 40 AS "PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS, BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS, AND LICENSED PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS".

ASHA is advocating for two amendments to Behavior Analyst Licensing bill.

- “In section 3 (40-75-20, as revised), add speech-language pathology services and audiology services, as defined by SC code 40-67-20 to the list of services that are not the practice of ABA; and
- “In section 11 (40-75-285, as revised), add audiologists and speech-language pathologists, as defined by SC code 40-67-20 to the list of providers that the Act would not apply to.”

SCSHA determined to ask for an additional amendment, to require the ABA to request a referral to SLP/AUD if the patient has possible communication, hearing, and/or feeding/swallowing impairments. The wording of this amendment is under review and we do not know if SCABA will agree with SCSHA to add this amendment.

The SC senate scheduled a hearing on May 5, 2021 for S 630, which was attended by Adrienne Davis (SCSHA President Elect-Elect), and Wanda

Crotwell, our lobbyist. As of the time of updating this report, the bill has been sent back to the senate sponsor as well as SCABA to address some of the disagreements heard from various parties on the licensure bill, including SCSHA. We expect discussions to continue during the summer and fall, led by our president, Stephen Kneece, and coordinated by Wanda Crotwell and Kelly Caldwell.

If these amendments are passed into the final house bill, South Carolina SLPs and Audiologist will have protection from scope of practice encroachment from ABA therapists, and would not require an additional state license if they obtain ABA therapy training, as long as they are not calling themselves a “licensed behavior analyst.” If you are interested, the SCABA organization published a document on the rationale for a licensure for behavior analysts in South Carolina, [available here](https://www.sc-aba.org/resources/Documents/LICENSURE%20OF%20BEHAVIOR%20ANALYSTS%202.0.pdf).

<https://www.sc-aba.org/resources/Documents/LICENSURE%20OF%20BEHAVIOR%20ANALYSTS%202.0.pdf>

Let South Carolina Hear (H 3234, S 193)

There are several bills across the country called “Let ____ Hear” which mandate health insurance plans to cover hearing aids for individuals 18 years of age or younger. The South Carolina Audiology Association (SCAA) is in support of this legislation. SCSHA will help support this legislation.

Date of introduction in the House: 1/12/2021

Status: In Committee - Labor, Commerce and Industry

Full text of the bill:

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/3234.htm

H 3234 General Bill, By [Huggins](#), [Forrest](#), [Oremus](#), [Blackwell](#) and [Davis](#)

Summary: Hearing Aides Coverage for Children Act

A BILL TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 38-71-48 SO AS TO ENACT THE "HEARING AID COVERAGE FOR CHILDREN ACT", TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS, TO REQUIRE GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE AND GROUP HEALTH BENEFIT PLANS TO COVER HEARING AIDS AND REPLACEMENT HEARING AIDS FOR AN INSURED WITH IMPAIRED HEARING WHO IS EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER, TO PROVIDE FOR THE SCOPE OF COVERAGE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Hearing Aids (H 3400)

ASHA sent a letter to the committee in support of this legislation.

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/advocacy/comments/asha-support-letter-to-south-carolina-on-h3400-hearing-aids-031121.pdf>

The equivalent Senate bill has been filed on 1/12/2021 and is in committee as well (Banking and Insurance).

Language Equality and Acquisition of Deaf Kids Act (S 490)

ASHA sent a letter objecting to the LEAD-K legislation. Multiple other agencies including the Department of Education also objected to this legislation. The bill currently has too many disagreements to move forward.

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/uploadedfiles/advocacy/comments/asha-opposition-letter-to-south-carolina-sb490-lead-k-031621.pdf>

Teacher Step Pay Increases (H3609)

This bill restores teacher step increases for 2020-21. The bill was passed unanimously by the SC senate 3/4/21, the SC house 3/10/21, and **signed by the Governor on March 11, 2021.**

In 2020, Act 135 suspended teacher step pay increases due to the pandemic. This legislation restored that pay scale.

This legislation may affect SC Speech-Language Pathologists who are paid on the educator pay scale.

There are other bills that have been filed that may eventually impact the teacher pay scale in the future.

Editor's Notes

The COVID-19 crisis set our advocacy efforts behind. Most of the things we hoped to accomplish in 2020 were stopped dead in their tracks by COVID-19. One major issue that we are aware of is the SLP educator certificate now required by the SC Department of Education, established on July 1, 2020, after passage of the SLP Universal Licensure bill (2019-2020 S 227). While we hoped this bill would help unify the licensure and credentialing process under LLR alone, the Department of Education was legally required to form an educator certificate.



If you have not submitted a REQUEST FOR CHANGE / ACTION form to change your previous DOE credential to an educator certificate, please see the DOE website below and submit the necessary paperwork. We do not know if there is a grace period for submitting that form, so it is best to take care of it as soon as possible. SCSHA hoped to have a conversation with the department of education about this credential in 2020, but this conversation unfortunately did not occur. We hope to restart a conversation in 2021 and continue the positive relationship with DOE that we treasure.

Here is the website to view the requirements for applying for and renewing an educator certificate.

<https://ed.sc.gov/educators/certification/slp/>

Updates from the Vice President of Government Affairs

August – November 2021:

Our new SCSHA Committees got started to assist our government affairs with advocacy. Most committees now have a private Facebook group to connect on a regular basis and have started working on issues. If you want to sign up for a committee with SCSHA and did not, you can sign up at any time. Many hands are needed to do the work of advocacy!



SC DHHS Updates:

- The SC DHHS Durable Medical Equipment (DME) manual was updated in September, effective October 1, 2021 replacing “suitable for use in home” to “suitable for use in any setting in which normal life activities take place” to match the CFR.
- A new bulletin was issued regarding Medicaid provider relief funding.
- For more information on SC DHHS Medicaid bulletins, go to <https://www.scdhhs.gov/Medicaid-Bulletins>.



Where are we on fixing the CPT codes with SC Medicaid?

The codes we requested to be fixed are being worked on by SC DHHS. We will provide an update as soon as it's available. We anticipated an update in September, but are still waiting. These code changes are a long time in coming.

Babynet Issues?

SCSHA had multiple important meetings this quarter. Our representatives met with and submitted comments to SC Babynet about some of the manuals that they are planning to change. If you want to be part of the SCSHA Babynet committee to contribute to changes, please sign up today!

Regulatory Stuff...

SCSHA met with the SC Board of SLP and Audiology in October to deliver our first comments on the proposed regulatory changes. The SC Board is going to be publishing proposed regulation changes to Chapter 115 this year. SCSHA will issue follow-up comments on behalf of our membership by the executive board in coming weeks.

Legislative Day 2022 and the Interstate Compact Bill

We are continuing to work on advocacy related to the Interstate Compact Bill (H 3840). We are planning legislative day for advocacy to occur just after our SCSHA Convention in February, and we need you to save the date!

February 23, 2022

Tentative schedule:

8:30 SCSHA Breakfast at the Palmetto Club
9:00-10:30 Advocacy training
10:30-12:00 Listen in at the SC House Session
12:00 Lunch on your own
1:30 Listen in at the SC Senate Session
3:30 End

Registration starts December 1st at noon. There are a limited number of spots and the cost is included in your SCSHA Membership fee this year. We will keep a waitlist.



Updates from the Vice President of Government Affairs

December 2021 – February 2022:

I have been hard at work on issues related to SC Medicaid, legislation, and state agency advocacy. There have been time-sensitive requests for communication from SCSHA on various issues. The Legislative committee had its first official meeting! And, we've been strategically planning for 2022 and beyond. Read below for specific updates!

SC Medicaid Updates:

We are aware that some policy changes are coming out of SC DHHS related to ABA therapy reimbursement rates and some CPT code updates for occupational therapy and physical therapy; the low, medium, and high complexity codes were added to the SC Medicaid manual (section 4). The CPT code update requests for SLP services are still being reviewed by SC DHHS and may involve some impact to the Medicaid budget. There were also some personnel changes at DHHS in the last 6 months including bringing on a new director, Robert M. Kerr, who previously served as director from 2003-2007. We are hopeful that our CPT codes and reimbursement will be adjusted soon.

Legislative Day 2022

On January 11, 2022, the SC state house issued a statement that the **balconies would be closed to visitors**. This means that our legislative day as planned cannot take place. We are exploring alternatives to ensure that our membership can participate in advocacy at the state level. If you have ideas about advocacy to share, you are invited to join the legislative affairs committee!

Interstate Compact Bill

Our interstate compact bill (H. 3840) is in the House 3M subcommittee II, Occupational Regulation and Licensing Boards. We will share updates with the membership as we move forward with this bill. Right now, we are working on getting the bill scheduled for a hearing with the subcommittee, which is chaired by Rep. Anne Parks.

School Choice: S. 935

If you've been engaging in local political issues, you've heard of school choice legislation this year. A bill was filed in the SC Senate called the "Put Parents in Charge Act" which creates Education Scholarship Accounts (ESAs). Under this program, SLP services are considered "qualifying expenses." Specific student eligibility requirements are listed including: family income at 200% or

How is ASHA helping SCSHA?

While we can't always share the conversations we have with ASHA representatives, we will share what we can. There is a lot that happens behind the scenes with ASHA. They help us with the content we put into letters to state agencies, discuss policy issues, and engage with us on advocacy frequently.

Connect with your ASHA SEAL, STAMP, and STAR to share your opinion on national issues related to education, Medicare, and reimbursement.

For more information about ASHA's engagement with state issues, you can check out:

<https://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/>

less of the poverty level, eligible for Medicaid, participated in the SC Early Reading Development and Education program, or previously received an ESA or Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) scholarship.

The content of this bill has been undergoing fierce debate in the early weeks of the 2022 legislative term and the bill has a large base of support in the SC Senate. As the bill is currently written, no member has brought any concerns to SCSHA about students having any problems accessing SLP services in the schools whether they utilize a school choice program or the residential district public school. At this time, SCSHA is not planning to submit comments to the committee on this bill. We would encourage you that if you have personal beliefs and preferences about school choice legislation to contact your SC Senator.

Regulatory stuff

During the latter half of 2021, SCSHA engaged with the state licensing board about the proposed changes to regulations, Chapter 115. We submitted comments on the notice of drafting and attended the LLR meeting in October. The Notice of Proposed Regulation (NPR) was released in December 2021. SCSHA sent a letter to LLR thanking them for acknowledging our board's comments on the proposed changes to the regulations. The NPR will go into effect 120 days from submission if the Senate does not address them specifically.

The changes include:

- Continuing education and new application requirement for applicants with an expired license
- New sections added on supervised clinical experience for the SLP Assistant clinical clock hours, which may occur outside of the academic degree program, which also allows the applicant to submit the ASHA SLP Assistant Certification as evidence of completing 100 clinical clock hours.
- Direct supervision for SLP Assistants will change from 15% to one of every seven therapy sessions, and must still occur on-site, in person, and documented in writing.
- SLP Assistants may not participate in feeding or swallowing activities, or treat a person who is medically fragile, as defined by the ASHA SLP Assistant scope of practice.
- For SLP Interns (Clinical Fellow SLPs), the supervised professional employment (SPE) requirements were simplified to 1260 hours earned over 1 year, and allows for part-time experience with a minimum of 5 hours per week.

A word from our committees:

Legislative Affairs Committee Meetings 2022

The work of this committee is ongoing. All meetings will be held via zoom from 12:30-2:30pm. Members should plan to attend at least 2 meetings per year. This schedule is subject to change and will updated on SCSHA.net.

January 15, Zoom, 12:30-2:30pm

February 16, after annual business meeting

May 14, Zoom 12:30-2:30pm

September 10, Zoom 12:30-2:30pm

November 12, Zoom 12:30-2:30pm

Babynet Issues?

We are sending a letter on behalf of SCSHA members to advocate for allowing co-treatment for babynet providers. If you would like to be involved with the Babynet committee please sign up today! Many hands make light work – and we need you!

School SLP Issues?

We are just getting the committee started. There is plenty of time for you to sign up and be part of the next wave of change. In the short term, the executive board is working on clarifying issues related to the educator certificate in partnership with ASHA.

- SPE supervisors are limited to supervising no more than 3 total SLP interns and/or SLP assistants at one time; supervisors must have a minimum of 3 years full-time licensed work experience which can include an internship or other mentored professional experience that follows completion of the post-graduate degree.

I am working on amending the outdated SCSHA policy and procedure document for the state agency network representative. The licensing boards do not “sunset” anymore; that state law was repealed in 1998. The needs of the association have also changed in recent years. We do not currently have an independent representative engaged with and monitoring activities of the licensing board on a regular basis. Therefore, I am proposing some modest updates to the P&P for the licensing board representative at the next executive board meeting, and have a candidate to recommend for this position who has long been engaged with SC license and regulatory issues for many years. The position has always been appointed at the discretion of the SCSHA executive board. If the candidate accepts and the appointee is confirmed, the SCSHA president will announce this appointee at Convention 2022.