



Kids deserve the best.

Policy and You: Advocacy Updates for EHDI in 2019

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Image from: Lavitrei via Shutterstock

We have no relevant financial or nonfinancial relationships to disclose.

Learning Objectives

- Define current legislation involving the EHDI community and audiology.
- Identify ways in which you can advocate for your profession and the EHDI community at the local and national level.
- Identify training resources available for legislative support.



Image taken from: <http://www.iaml.info/advocacy-committee>

Outline

Overview of legislative process

Current legislative issues involving the EHDI community and audiology

What you can do to get involved

Resources

Questions



Image from: <https://talkbusiness.net/2018/10/poll-hill-maintains-lead-over-tucker-in-second-congressional-district-race/>



Image from: <https://www.cuny.cuny.edu/publicpolicy>

Advocacy – What does it mean to you?

Merriam-Webster defines advocacy as, “the process of supporting a cause or proposal”.

The Three Branches of Government

LEGISLATIVE



- ★ Makes laws
- ★ Approves presidential appointments
- ★ Two senators from each state
- ★ The number of congressmen is based on population

EXECUTIVE

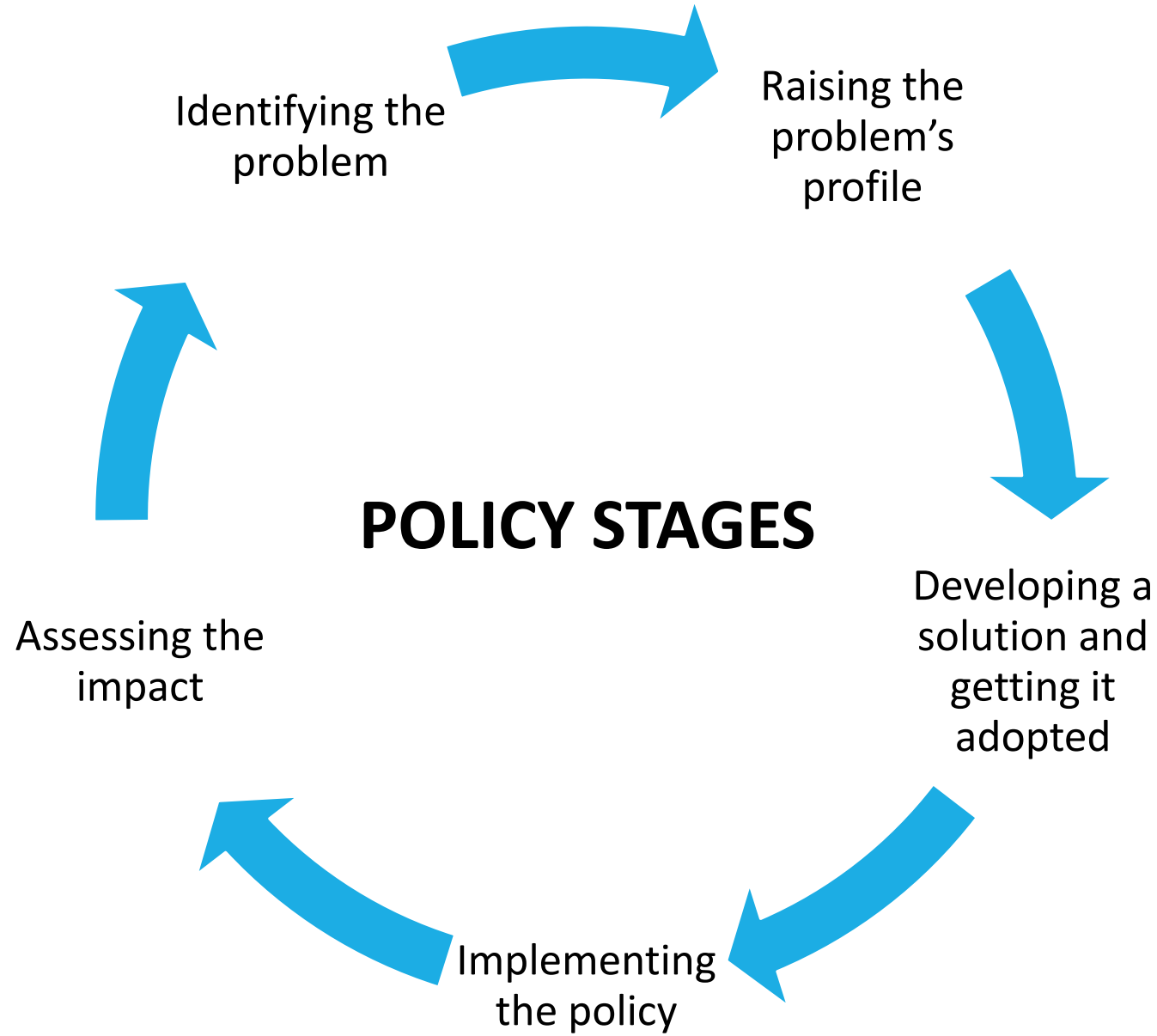


- ★ Signs laws
- ★ Vetoes laws
- ★ Pardons people
- ★ Appoints federal judges
- ★ Elected every four years

JUDICIAL



- ★ Decides if laws are constitutional
- ★ Are appointed by the president
- ★ There are 9 justices
- ★ Can overturn rulings by other judges



CURRENT ISSUES INVOLVING THE EHDI COMMUNITY



Image from: <http://kidworksclc.com/home/about-us/>

Higher Education



Image from: <https://csd.wisc.edu/masters/>

Audiology Service Provision



Image from: <https://hearbright.com/hearing-health-blog/four-ways-to-find-an-audiologist>

IDEA/School Based Funding

- Need to defend and support funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Federal funding should represent 40% of the average per pupil expense, but current funding in 2019 is at 17%
- Primary alternative to federal funding stream is Medicaid, so we also need to oppose any efforts to further restrict or limit payment on school-based Medicaid services for children with special needs



Image from: <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2000/09/4872.html>

Higher Education Reauthorization



- Protects current eligibility requirements for programmatic accreditors, such as the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA).
- Current proposals limits the amount of money graduate students, including those seeking a clinical doctorate in audiology or a master's degree in speech-language pathology can borrow from federally-funded student loan programs.
- Loan forgiveness provisions would be eliminated in current proposal.

Other Graduate Student Issues

Front Line Care Act – introduced in 2017, allows student loan repayments in exchange for health professionals providing two years of service in a health care facility facing a frontline scarcity area

ADVOCACY SUCCESS!

Tax Reform – tuition waivers for graduate students, originally included a problematic provision that would treat a tuition waiver for students in graduate programs as taxable income. Advocacy efforts by AAA and other organizations opposed this specific provision and it was removed.

Audiology Patient Choice Act: S. 2575

Reintroduced by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Rand Paul (R-KY) in 2018

- Provides Medicare patients with **direct access to audiologists**, without requiring an order from a medical doctor, for all services in their scope of practice
- Defines **audiologists as physicians** under Medicare
- Includes **reimbursement for aural (re)habilitation services**



Medicare Telehealth Parity Act: H.R.2550



Image from: <https://wahospitality.org/blog/the-future-of-telehealth-is-closer-than-you-think/>

Introduced in 2017 by Mike Thompson (D-CA), Gregg Harper (R-MS), Peter Welch (D-VT), and Diane Black (R-TN)

- Expands on the list of providers eligible for reimbursement for telehealth under Medicare to include audiologists, and speech language pathologists
- Allowing greater access to telehealth services also benefits patients who are not able to travel to a professional, which includes many elderly Medicare beneficiaries seeking the services of an audiologist.

Protect EHDI Initiatives



Image from: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/baby-hearing-screening/index.html>

- In 2018, EHDI was reauthorized for another 5 years
- Seeking full funding of EHDI for 2020

What Can You Do?

- Contact your Legislator
 - Write a letter
 - Send an email
 - Make an in-person visit
 - Make a phone call
 - Share your story



Getting Started: Planning a Visit With Your Legislator

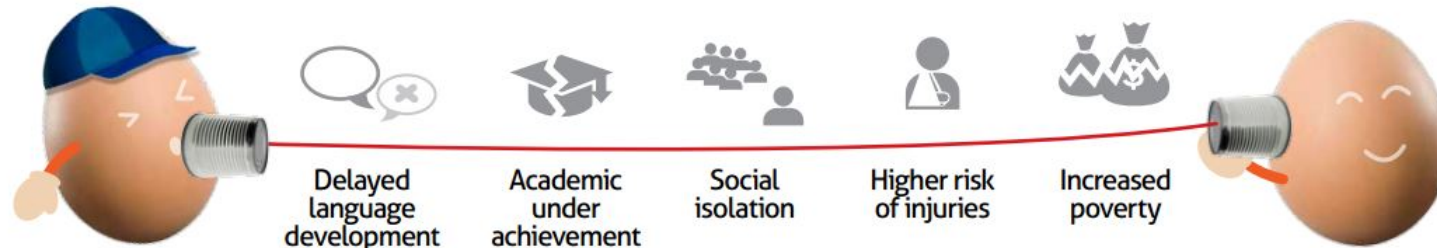
1. Register to vote! If it is election time, vote!
2. Research your legislator. Do they share your views?
3. Set up an appointment.
4. Determine which issues to discuss.
5. Make a “Leave Behind” for the legislator or staffer.
6. Make your position personal.



Image from: <https://my.lwv.org/texas/early-vote-texas-general-election>

Leave Behind Example

CONSEQUENCES, IF NOT ADDRESSED



STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION AND CARE



Strengthen

maternal and child healthcare programmes, including immunization and organizations of people with hearing loss



Train

Healthcare professionals in hearing care



Regulate and monitor

use of ototoxic medicines and environmental noise



Implement

infant and school-based hearing screening



Make accessible

hearing devices and communication therapies



Raise awareness

to promote hearing care and reduce stigma

Advocacy For You

- State issues
- Local issues
- Personal issues

Insurance Coverage for Hearing Aids for Children: Policy Discussion and Information



AAA Legislative Board Role:

1. Review current issues within Audiology and evaluate their relevancy to the growth of the field.
2. Educate members on action they can take to support or defeat legislation deemed to impact our profession and our patients.

Current Model State Legislation:

Illinois (Public Act 100-1026): Recently passed a bill that requires all insurance companies to cover hearing aids and replacement hearing aids every 3 years for children 18 years-old and under. This includes fees for fitting, dispensing and earmolds as well.

States that require hearing aid coverage for children: Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas⁴.

¹: <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick-statistics-hearing>

²: <https://www.asha.org/Articles/Early-Hearing-Detection-and-Intervention/>

³: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5973811/>

⁴: https://www.asha.org/advocacy/state/issues/ha_reimbursement/

Summary of Issue:

Hearing loss is the number one birth abnormality in the United States, with a prevalence of 2-3 out of 1,000 births¹.

Currently, insurance companies are not federally mandated to cover hearing aids for children. This leaves children who do not qualify for public aid without options besides private pay.

Hearing aids can cost between \$1500-\$4000, and need to be replaced about every 3-5 years. This is a large expense for low-income or middle-income families.

1-3-6: Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) has stated that the best speech and language outcomes come when children are screened for hearing loss by 1 month of age, diagnosed by 3 months of age, and fit with appropriate technology by 6 months of age².

If appropriately fit with hearing aids by 6 months of age, children diagnosed with hearing loss perform at a similar level in school to their normal hearing peers. One of the biggest barriers to getting children fit with hearing aids in a timely manner is finances³.



Take Action for Children with Hearing Loss

1. Support legislation that requires insurance companies to cover initial and replacement hearing aids for children of all socio-economic backgrounds.
2. Educate fellow policy-makers on the importance of hearing aids for children to learn language and be successful in school.
3. Reach out to national organizations such as AAA, ASHA, ELDI, and others to learn more about hearing loss in children.

Used with permission from author – Ruthie White

Get Involved

Join an organization and become involved!

- Student Organizations – SAA, NSSLHA
- Professional Organizations – AAA, ASHA, state organizations
- Family and Consumer Organizations– Hands and Voices, HLAA

Many more.....



HANDS &
VOICES™



AMERICAN
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-
HEARING ASSOCIATION



Resources

Who Represents You?

<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

AAA Legislative Action Center

<http://capwiz.com/audiology/home/>

ASHA Legislative Action Center

<https://takeaction.asha.org/?1>

Hands and Voices Advocacy Resource Page

http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/articles_index.html#adv

Hearing Loss Association of America Tools for Advocacy

<https://www.hearingloss.org/programs-events/advocacy/>

References

<https://takeaction.asha.org/?12>

<https://saa.audiology.org/>

<https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/the-legislative-process>

<https://www.audiology.org/advocacy/federal>

“I wouldn’t change **you** for the **world**, but I would change the **world** for you.”

-Unknown



“I always wondered why somebody doesn’t do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody.”

~ Lily Tomlin

Questions





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THANK YOU!