

# C H E C K L I S T

for SLPs and Audiologists

## GETTING YOUR EMPLOYER TO COVER SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

- Review your employee health plan benefits to determine coverage of speech, language, and hearing services. What is covered? What are limits? Could benefits be better?
- Target the person within your organization who makes decisions about employee health benefits. It might be the human resources director, benefits specialist, union representative, or company president.
- Set up a meeting to introduce yourself, and to discuss speech-language and audiology services as covered benefits in an employer-sponsored health plan. Explain that these services are essential components of a basic benefit package. Provide a copy of ASHA's scope of practice and a descriptive ASHA brochure about coverage of services.

- Discuss the importance of communication. It affects every aspect of a person's life, including family and work interactions. Evaluation and treatment of a hearing loss or other communication disorder can improve an employee's performance on the job and improve employee morale and productivity.
- Explain who speech-language pathologists and audiologists are and what they do. Briefly discuss education and license requirements and typical practice settings, including hospitals, clinics, and private practice.
- Promote coverage for speech, language, swallowing, audiology evaluations, aural/audiologic rehabilitation, and treatment related to illness, disease, injury, congenital and/or developmental conditions. Provide ASHA's model benefit language.

- Promote coverage for hearing aid assessments, fitting, orientation, and hearing aids. Undetected and untreated hearing loss in young children impairs speech-language skills, learning ability, and social growth. In adults, it can cause depression, social isolation, and lowers worker productivity.

Speech-language pathologists and audiologists should be sure their own health plans offer speech, language, and hearing benefits, and be prepared to advocate for improved coverage when needed. While many health plans and managed care organizations recognize the importance of audiology and speech-language services, there are still a number of plans that do not cover these services or offer only limited coverage. Health plans that offer comprehensive coverage packages address the overall wellness of plan participants, which keeps health costs down. Here is a "checklist" that will assist you in approaching your employer for coverage of services. You may need to make modifications to fit your advocacy effort. Visit ASHA's webpage for more information.