



# Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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## State Advocates for Reimbursement Ohio's Action Plan

**STAR:** Katrina Zeit

**Mission:** Advocate for consistent coverage and equitable reimbursement by private payers for speech-language pathology and audiology services.

1. Serve as a conduit to their state association for all information related to ASHA's Focused Initiative on Health Care Reimbursement.
  - **STAR Strategy:** Incorporate a STAR "presence" (e.g., presentation, report, recruitment activity) into annual convention of state association. For state association meetings, the STAR will provide a report for state association leadership.
  - **OSLHA Action:** Katrina Zeit and members of OSLHA's Insurance Committee will be presenting, "Insurance Advocacy Boot Camp: Empowering Your Clients and Families," at the annual OSLHA Convention in March.
2. Develop strategies for successful private insurance advocacy across the states
  - **STAR Strategy:** Establish/revive/expand committee within your state to work on private health plan reimbursement issues.
  - **OSLHA Action:** Katrina submits a written update concerning the activities of the OSLHA Insurance Committee in each issue of the OSLHA's newsletter, **Communication Matters**. Requests are made to recruit new members. The goal is to have a member from each major metropolitan area in Ohio. Two new members, from Cleveland and Youngstown, have joined the committee since August.
  - **STAR Strategy:** Prioritize obstacles to coverage (e.g., ICD-9-CM codes, coverage limitations) that were defined in Omaha.
  - **OSLHA Action:** The OSLHA Insurance Committee made recommendations for prioritizing obstacles to coverage, which were submitted to the STAR committee by Katrina Zeit.
  - **STAR Strategy:** Compile and disseminate current resources (ASHA's and Network's) to assist one another with advocacy efforts.

- **OSLHA Action:** Katrina distributed ASHA's Employer Insurance Packets to:
  1. OSLHA Legislative Counselor Members
  2. OSLHA Insurance Committee Members
  3. Families attending a fluency program in Greater Cincinnati
  4. OSLHA's Community Resource Members (i.e. Consumer Advocacy Groups affiliated with speech and hearing disorders) (In process).

Clinicians and Consumer Advocacy Groups receiving the packets are encouraged to distribute them to their clients and members. Families receiving the packets are encouraged to use them to request better coverage from their employer.

3. Promote the importance of and need for comprehensive coverage of and reimbursement for speech-language pathology and audiology services to legislators, employers, consumers, health plans, and related professionals.

- **OSLHA Strategy:** Enlist families to collaborate with the OSLHA Insurance Committee to advocate for improved coverage to a variety of stakeholders including:
  1. Employer
  2. Union
  3. Insurance oversight committee (or insurance plan)

The goal is to group families together by large employer or insurance plan. For instance, find several families that work for the same large employer GE to request a group meeting with their Human Resources Director concerning speech and hearing benefits. In these meetings, families will have the opportunity to tell their personal story of the need for services and explain the progress their children have made as a result of therapy. Depending upon their situation, the families will explain that their children may not be eligible for speech therapy through the preschool disability programs or school system, are not covered by insurance, and cannot afford to private pay.

Members of the OSLHA Insurance Committee plan to participate in these meetings to provide background information concerning speech and hearing services. The ASHA Employer Insurance Packets will be distributed and used to highlight cost and outcomes data. We plan to emphasize that our services are inexpensive and valuable – patients and families benefit from our services and make progress!

- **OSLHA Actions:**
  1. The OSLHA Insurance Committee developed a survey (attached) requesting families to participate in this process.
  2. Surveys were distributed to:
    - The clients of the Insurance Committee members
    - Families participating in a fluency program in the Cincinnati area.
    - Consumer Advocacy Groups affiliated with OSLHA. (In process)
  3. The survey was published in OSLHA's newsletter, Communication Matters, for OSLHA members to distribute to their clients.
  4. An excel spreadsheet was created in order to track families who returned a survey by employer, insurance plan, diagnosis, and location. (See attached).
- **OSLHA Strategy:** **OSLHA Legislative Counselor members will request meetings with their employer to discuss improving speech and hearing coverage in their benefit plans. ASHA's Employer Insurance Packets will be used in the meeting.**
- **OSLHA Actions:**

1. **Katrina attended an OSLHA LC meeting and requested that all LC members obtain a copy of their speech and hearing benefit policy and submit it to Katrina for compilation. A request was also sent to all LC members via email.**
  2. **Policies will be reviewed by the OSLHA Insurance Committee to determine which employers of LC members to target for meetings early in 2004.**
- **STAR Strategy #4:** Initiate contact with your state insurance commissioner. They are historically consumer-friendly. Focus of message should be your desire to assist consumers in obtaining more comprehensive coverage per their request. (Status: Initiated by ASHA)
  - **OSLHA Strategy #4:** The OSLHA Insurance Committee initiated contact with the Ohio Department of Insurance in 2000.
  - **Strategy #5:** Initiate contact with unions that are familiar with ASHA (American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, United Autoworkers). Outcome could be an article, a meeting, a posting on their website, a session at their convention.
  - **OSLHA Strategy #5:** See above.
  - **Strategy #6:** Provide patients with an ASHA Employer Insurance Packet and ask that they set up a meeting with their benefits manager.
  - **OSLHA Strategy #6:** See above.