

C H E C K L I S T

■ Promote coverage for augmentative/alternative communication assessment and related assistive devices. People who are nonspeaking use such devices to communicate their needs at work, home, and in the community.

■ Tell the employer that speech-language and hearing benefits are a must if a health plan is to provide comprehensive health care benefits, and that such benefits allow employees to communicate effectively at work and at home.

■ Your employer will want to know the percent of the employee population that needs speech-language, and hearing coverage and how many would be expected to use the benefit. Explain that 1 out of 6 Americans has a communication disorder.

■ Share data on other companies in your region that currently provide these services. Call colleagues, friends, and family to determine such coverage. An ASHA survey showed 82% of Fortune 500 companies cover speech-language pathology and audiology services.

■ Employee benefits professionals will want to know the cost benefit of your services. Adding these benefits to a health plan costs less than 35 cents per month per person. Costs to add the benefit are minimal, as is usage.

■ Invite the employer to visit your clinic or treatment setting to observe the services being performed.

■ An employer will want to know what is reasonable to cover and not to cover. Offer guidance from your own practice records. Provide a copy of ASHA's Preferred Practice Patterns. Treatment efficacy data may also help an employer in designing a plan. For example, efficacy data shows that stuttering treatment results in improvement in 70% of all cases.

■ Some employers may ask why such services should be covered in the company health plan when these services are provided by the public schools? Explain that schools treat communication disorders that impact education and learning. Clinics, hospitals, health departments, and private practices provide speech-language pathology and audiology services beyond what may be available in public schools.

■ Tell your co-workers about the importance of coverage for services, and ask them to contact the employee benefits manager.

