

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

ACTION REFERRAL

TO <i>Myers / Hamilton</i>	DATE <i>1-29-08</i>
-------------------------------	------------------------

DIRECTOR'S USE ONLY		ACTION REQUESTED	
1. LOG NUMBER <i>000396</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for the Director's signature DATE DUE _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare reply for appropriate signature DATE DUE <i>2-7-08</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action DATE DUE _____
2. DATE SIGNED BY DIRECTOR <i>Cleaved 2/13/08, e-mail attached</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> FOIA	

APPROVALS (Only when prepared for director's signature)	APPROVE	* DISAPPROVE (Note reason for disapproval and return to preparer.)	COMMENT
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

RECEIVED
JAN 29 2008
DIVISION OF CARE MANAGEMENT

SHA

Sumter Hearing Associates

Virginia M. Corley, Ph.D., CCC-A, FAHA
Audiologist

1116-F Alice Drive
Sumter, South Carolina 29150
Phone: (803) 469-7770
Fax: (803) 469-7701
E-mail: sha3@fci-net

Kimberly L. Kelly, M. Aud., CCC-A
Audiologist

RECEIVED

JAN 29 2008

Department of Health & Human Services
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Ms Emma Forkner, Director
South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Post Office Box 8206
Columbia, SC 29202-8206

1/22/2008

Dear Ms Forkner,

Thank you for your kind response to my letter about Medicaid reimbursement for children needing hearing aids. I spoke to Felicity Myers on the telephone today, and the nature of the misunderstanding became apparent. There are many audiologists who accept Medicaid for diagnostic testing on children, but very few who will accept the Medicaid reimbursement for codes pertaining to hearing aids. It is not even the reimbursement for the hearing aids (DME portion) but the service component such as the codes for hearing aid evaluations, fitting, orientation, ear molds, verification and validation, hearing checks, cleaning and counseling that are completely inadequate. Medicare does not reimburse for these codes, as Medicare does not cover hearing aids, and so does not provide a benchmark for setting the reimbursement levels.

When we fit a small child with hearing aids at Sumter Hearing Associates, we schedule 1½ - 2 hours, and try to have two audiologists available for some of the more difficult procedures. The reimbursement for this code is \$4.38. However if infants and children receive the proper intervention during the first four years, there is no reason for them to be behind their peers in language development. The basis of literacy is good auditory input during the critical early years of childhood. The present set up makes providing the proper care difficult for both audiologists and for families.

BabyNet and CRS have recognized the potential consequences of Medicaid's actions with the reimbursement reduction and while the current contracts are in effect have agreed to pay the difference between the old and new rates. So instead of a simple filing and reimbursement protocol, now filing claims will be more costly to the providers AND the State. Prior authorizations have to be cut by DHEC, Medicaid has to be filed and then charges are re-filed with the DHEC authorization for the additional reimbursement. That's a lot of extra work for reimbursement that was already insufficient.

Reimbursement issues only scratch the surface of problems facing children needing hearing aids. Families are being put on the new Medicaid managed care plans only to find out that when their child needs hearing aids, there are no providers in their area contracted with their managed care plan. Audiology services, like speech, physical therapy and occupational therapy, should be "carved out" of managed care and able to be billed under standard Medicaid to increase access to care.

It is a deeply frustrating situation that has myself and other professionals in this field discouraged because we have the tools, the knowledge and the passion to help these children, but the bureaucracy ties our hands. If only the process could be simplified and that extra money being spent on the current laborious process go towards establishing fair and adequate reimbursement.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I sincerely hope that a solution can be found. Ms Myers has invited me to meet with her to discuss the details, and I plan to bring the information that we have gathered and collated over the past four years.

Sincerely,



Virginia Corley, Ph.D., CCC-A, FAAA
Audiologist

Senator Joel Lourie

Senator Phil Leventis

Senator John Land

DHEC Commissioner C. Earl Hunter

AG Bell

South Carolina Academy of Audiology

Tara Carroll, Director of First Sound.

Cynthia Higgins, DHHS

From: Margarete Keller
To: Beverly Hamilton; Felicity Myers
Date: 2/13/2008
Time: 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Subject: Mtg. w/Virginia Corley, Ph.D. + Senator Phil Leventis
Place: Felicity's Ofc.

CC: Annmarie McCanne; Margarete Keller

Sumter Hearing Assoc.

282 }
396 } Dr. Corley + Felicity met 2-13
can be closed