



ASHA Education Priorities Presented to the Obama Transition Team

ASHA is the professional and scientific association representing over 130,000 speech-language pathologists (SLPs), audiologists and speech-language and hearing scientists qualified to meet the needs of the estimated 49 million (or 1 in 6) children and adults in the United States with communication disorders. Over half of ASHA members work in educational settings. The following education issues have been identified as high priorities for our members.

Full Funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Administration should support the mandatory full funding of IDEA. Although Congress in recent years has made significant progress to increase funding, there is still a needed 117% increase before the program is fully funded. Twenty-five cents of every dollar spent by the federal government on IDEA Part B State Grants goes to the provision of related services, including speech-language pathology and audiology, for children with disabilities. These services assist children with disabilities and help them benefit from special education, including the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions.

Parents Right To Know Improvement Act

The Administration should support legislation that provide parents the authority to know about the qualifications of specialized support personnel, including speech-language pathologists and audiologists, working with their children in the schools as outlined in H.R. 6292 the Parent's Right-To-Know Improvement Act of 2008, introduced in the 110th Congress. At a minimum, the law requires that parents may request information regarding state licensure and certification for grade level and subjects taught; emergency or provisional certification or waivers of those requirements; college majors and other graduate certificates or degrees. Current requirements already exist for teacher qualifications under NCLB/ESEA.

Fund Loan Forgiveness Program for Professions in National Need (Education Stimulus)

Loan forgiveness provisions the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (P.L.110-315), should be included in the Obama Administration's budget. Title IV, Section 428k, Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need, of P.L.110-315 would allow more low-income students with speech, language, and hearing disabilities to have direct access qualified audiology and speech-language pathology services in their own school. Section 428k would achieve this by authorizing up to \$10,000 in federal student loan forgiveness to qualified school-based audiologist and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who work in economically-disadvantaged (Title I) schools for at least five consecutive years.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) grants have made significant strides in assisting states to develop infant hearing screening and intervention programs. Although most states require newborn infant screening, significant work remains to ensure that newborns with hearing loss receive timely and appropriate services. Continued federal funding is necessary to ensure that state EHDI programs become operational, successful, and properly link screening programs with diagnosis and early intervention. It is estimated although infants are being screened for hearing loss, more efforts need to be placed on follow-up and intervention. Reauthorization legislation that would refocus federal agency activities toward this mission was passed in the House in the 110th Congress, but held up in the Senate by Senator Colburn.