STOP MEDICARE PAYMENT CUTS TO PROTECT ACCESS TO AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

ACTION REQUESTED
Stop cuts to Medicare Part B payments scheduled for 2024 to ensure beneficiary access to audiology and speech-language pathology services.

ISSUE: Medicare Part B Payment Cuts Will Reduce Beneficiary Access to Services Provided by Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists
An increasing number of audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) report real practice impacts resulting from inadequate Medicare reimbursement rates, according to ASHA member survey data. In 2023, 19% of members reported reduced clinical staff positions and 6% reported restricting the number of patients seen from Medicare.

Medicare Part B payment cuts on multiple fronts continue to negatively impact the ability of Medicare providers to ensure adequate access to care, especially in rural and lower income areas. This includes statutory pay-as-you-go (PAYGO), Medicare sequestration, the multiple procedure payment reduction (MPPR), and conversion factor (CF) cuts in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS).

The gap between provider payment rates and rising practice costs will continue to widen considerably, especially in the absence of an annual inflationary payment update—the MPFS is the only Medicare payment system without an annual adjustment for inflation—and a long-term, comprehensive reform of the payment system.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) previously implemented payment changes that would have triggered significant payment reductions under Medicare Part B; however, Congress partially mitigated these payment cuts in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Audiologists and SLPs once again face cuts to Medicare Part B payment rates in 2024—including a 3.4% cut to the MPFS CF and the continuation of a 2% cut due to budget sequestration. Congress must act before the end of the year to stop the cuts in 2024.

ASHA supports both short and long-term solutions to stabilize Medicare payments and ensure beneficiary access to services that will lower health care costs. These solutions include:

• Stopping the scheduled 3.4% cut related to CF reduction in 2024;
• Enacting H.R. 2474, the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which adds an annual inflationary update to Medicare payments;
• Eliminating the 2% payment cut related to sequestration;
• Waiving statutory PAYGO that adds up to an additional 4% cut to Medicare payments; and
• Stopping implementation of the G2211 add-on code that Congress previously delayed and that is responsible for a significant portion of the CF cuts in 2024.

SOLUTION: Tell Congress to stop Medicare Part B payment cuts scheduled for 2024.

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