



**California Speech Language Hearing Association (CSHA)
Legislative Action Day
May 7th, 2024**

Goals of Leg Action Day:

- Educate policymakers on what/who are speech language pathologists (SLPs), speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs), audiologists.
- Advocate for CSHA legislative priorities.
- Build relationships with legislators.

About Speech-Language Pathology

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in infants, children and adults. In many settings, SLPs often work as part of a collaborative, interdisciplinary team, which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and rehabilitation counselors. Speech-language pathologists in higher education train the next generation of these professionals to address the growing needs for services.

CSHA legislative advocacy aims to increase lawmakers' understanding of the variety of roles and services provided by speech-language pathologists and improve state policies to support client access to services and the systems in which speech-language pathologists work.

CSHA Message to Legislators on Speech-Language Pathology- Share your stories, and those of your clients, students, & patients.

- Talk about your role as a SLP –describe the type of disorders you treat:
 - Speech disorders
 - Language disorders
 - Social communication disorders
 - Cognitive-communication disorders
 - Swallowing disorders (dysphagia)
- Describe how you provide direct services to your clients, students, and/or patients –early intervention programs (infants and toddlers, 0 to 3), educational setting or health care setting.
- Talk about how you are an integral part of a treatment team to support your clients, students, or patients.
 - SLPs work from birth through end of life, helping people communicate, and swallow safely and effectively.
 - SLPs often work as part of a collaborative, interdisciplinary team, which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, physical and occupational therapists, and rehabilitation counselors.
- Highlight how you support culturally & linguistically diverse client needs.
- Highlight the SLP Workforce Shortage
 - Not enough SLPs to keep up with the increased demand for services in Early Start programs, schools and healthcare organizations.
 - Shortage can be tied to a number of factors – higher demand for services since pandemic, not enough graduate training programs, and SLPs leaving the workforce due to work environment and demanding workload with higher caseloads.



Priorities & Positions

Governor's Proposal to Delay Implementation of Developmental Services Provider Rate Reform – CSHA Opposes The Governor's January Budget proposes to delay the final phase of the Developmental Services Provider Rate Reform until July 1, 2025. This one-year rate delay results in \$1 billion less going to the critical supports and services for Californians with developmental disabilities, including infants and toddlers served through Early Start, the state early intervention program. The \$1 billion delay is one of the largest delays proposed by the Governor for 2024-25. CSHA understands that with the delay, the savings to the state is only \$612.5 million and this reduction would impact services to the state's most vulnerable population. Moreover, by withholding this \$612.5 million to continue with the scheduled rate reform, California is leaving \$408 million of federal funds on the table.

The impacts of the pandemic on our most vulnerable populations, especially young children, require continued attention to ensure families have access and support. Many speech-language pathologists provide services through the Department of Developmental Services Regional Centers via the Early Start Program funded by the state.

According to the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), as of December 2023, there are about 56,000 infants and toddlers in the Early Start Program. The Medi-Cal rates for their professional services are not commensurate with their costs and many have left or are considering leaving the program due to these low reimbursements. The delay in the agreed-upon rate reform will only exacerbate this exit to the detriment of consumers who need services.

Eighty-five percent of brain and cognitive development occurs in the first 3 years of life emphasizing vocabulary size is the predictor of reading and educational outcomes and increases in the prevalence of developmental disabilities are causing an influx of infants and young children who require support from speech-language pathologists who can assist them with learning to communicate and swallow. These children do not grow out of their disabilities and require intervention provided by speech language pathologists working in the state Early Start program to function in their communities, schools, and society.

CSHA Message to Legislators on the Governor's Proposal to Delay Implementation of Developmental Services Provider Rate Reform - CSHA believes that this \$1 Billion is necessary in budget year 2024-25 to allow families to receive the services that they need. CSHA urges the Legislature to reject the Governor's proposal to delay the agreed upon rate increase for DDS providers.

Develop consistent Regional Center practices & services – CSHA Supports

The 2023-24 Budget Trailer Bill on Human Services, SB 138, added Section 4435.1 to the Welfare and Institutions Code. The statute includes requirements for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to establish standardized processes and rates for service providers, including speech-language pathologists. The statute requires that DDS undertake this effort with input from stakeholders and to address barriers that may impact access to services.

DDS is responsible for administering the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act (Lanterman Act). DDS carries out its responsibilities through contracts with 21 community-based, non-profit corporations known as regional centers. Regional centers are fixed points of contacts for all with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The regional centers coordinate services for each individual with IDD through an Individual Program Plan (IPP), and work with local vendors to purchase the needed services and supports to carry out the IPP.

CSHA Message to Legislators on Developing consistent Regional Center practices & services – CSHA supports the new program requirements for regional centers and the development of consistent Regional Center practices and services and encourages the legislature to monitor this reform to ensure stakeholder input is included in the process and that implementation occurs in 2025. CSHA believes that consistent procedures across the 21 regional centers in the State will help with consumer access and provide a more consistent early intervention system.



Governor's Proposal to develop the Master Plan for Developmental Services - CSHA Supports

The Governor's January Budget directs DDS, over the next year, to develop a Master Plan for Developmental Services in an effort to establish a more quality-driven and consumer-friendly experience for individuals and families receiving developmental services. As part of the process, DDS has convened a workgroup of key stakeholders to inform the development of the Plan, specifically focusing on a program management system that will be used to collect and analyze data and make recommendations that emphasize quality, equity, and outcomes, while improving regional center accountability.

The Stakeholder Committee will be tasked with working with California Health and Human Services (CalHHS) and its departments to develop a Master Plan for Developmental Services, to be released by March 2025. This Master Plan will outline shared goals of developing a system that is person-centered, equity-focused, and data-driven while maximizing the effectiveness of recent investments to improve outcomes for consumers.

CSHA Message to Legislators on Governor's Proposal to develop the Master Plan for Developmental Services – While CSHA supports this new effort, we want to make sure that stakeholders from the field are included in the process and that the 2023 Budget Trailer bill provisions and goals to standardizing procedures across Regional Centers are upheld.

Legislative Priority: AB 2423 (Mathis) – Developmental service rates (as amended March 21, 2024) – CSHA Supports

The bill would require the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), commencing on July 1, 2025, and every other year thereafter, to review and update the rate models per the cost inputs available at the time of the review and shall post the updated rate models to its internet website no later than January 1 of the following year.

In 2016, the State implemented a five year phase in for DDS Rate Reform. The rate study was undertaken, in part, because the historical rate structure did not result in funding levels for service providers that kept pace with system growth or supported an adequate supply of providers.

CSHA Message to Legislators on AB 2423 (Mathis) – AB 2423 addresses a long-standing funding issue and ensures that service providers are provided with the necessary resources to provide those within the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community with the services and care they deserve.

Your Voice Makes a Difference!