



What's new?

**Get your krewe
ready for TAA
this fall!**

**Save the Date
for TAA 2023**

**The Scoop from
the Scott Haug
Foundation**

**Capital Day with
TAA**

**Medicare Direct
Access for Texas
Audiologists**

**Have you seen
the TAA Job
Board?**

**A MESSAGE FROM
YOUR TAA
PRESIDENT**

**Tracy Board, Au.D.
TAA President**



It's only April, and already, the TAA board has had an exciting and busy start to 2023! Our first face to face meeting, held in January, gave us an opportunity to come together and plan for all of the opportunities ahead for the year. Because 2023 is a legislative year in Texas, Matt Lyon, Anna Jilla and Alex Morris have been hard at work looking at all of the legislation that can and will affect us as professionals. Alex was able to plan a Day at the Capitol, and on March 1, audiologists and graduate students were able to meet with Brad Shields and other key individuals to represent our interests. It was a fantastic day and a wonderful learning opportunity for all involved.

Meanwhile, board members are constantly working behind the scenes in the interest of Audiology. Sarah Williams coordinates with board members and sponsors to create this newsletter and to share information with membership, and handles the silent auction at our annual conference. Jamie Hand is constantly communicating with audiologists across the state about the value of TAA and to encourage our colleagues to join. Connie Stephens has taken on the enormous task of keeping us organized, and Grace Kendrick has become our new connection to graduate programs and audiology students across the state. And last, but CERTAINLY not least, Carmen Landry has been working diligently to secure some AMAZING speakers for our upcoming conference.

We can't wait to see you in October to celebrate Mardi Gras in San Marcos! Laissez les bons temps rouler!

TAA 24th Annual Conference in San Marcos

Carmen Landry, AuD
TAA Conference Chair

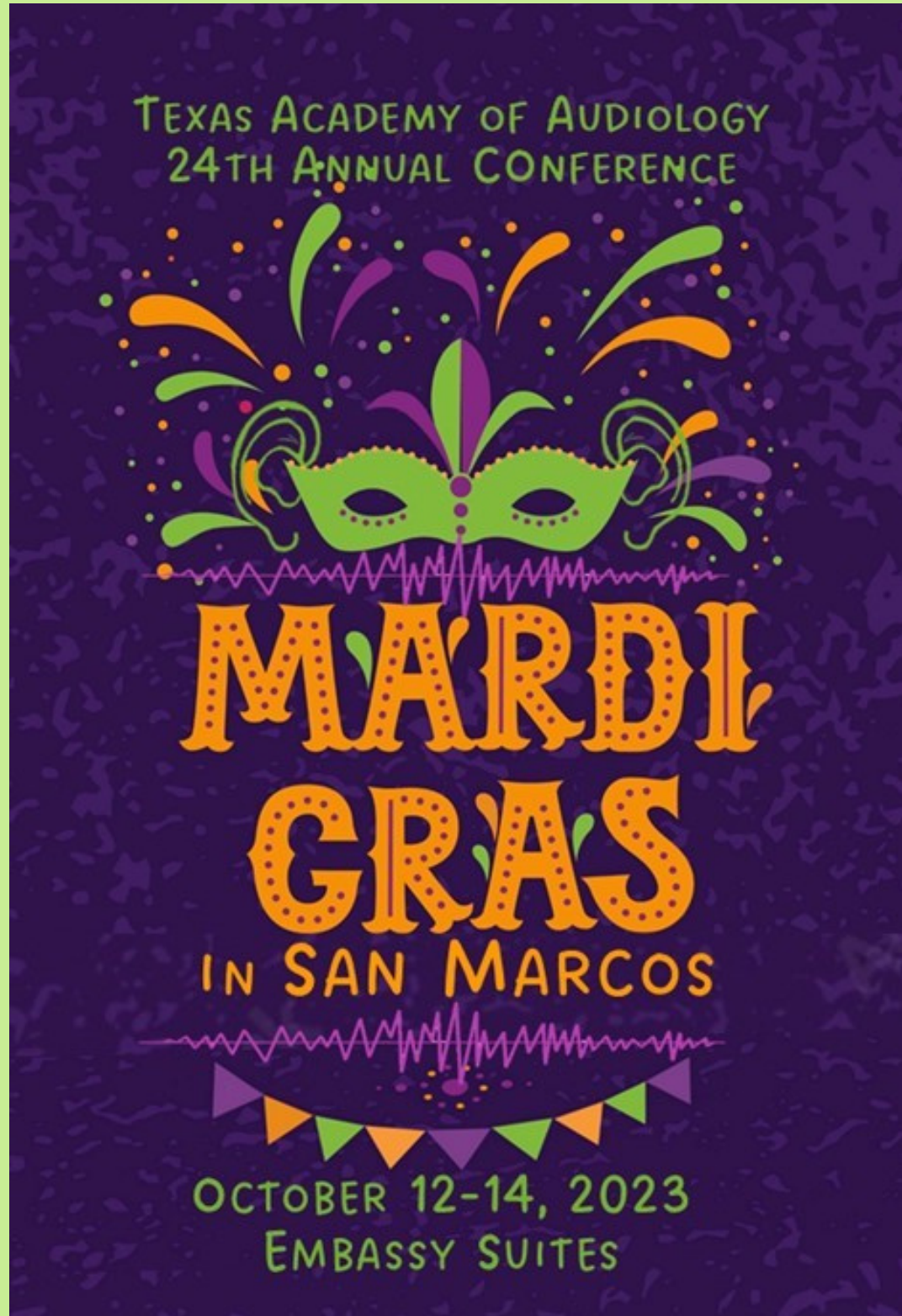


Hello TAA Members!

The TAA board is very excited to start plans for our 2023 conference.

Please mark your calendars and grab your Krewe, because we are going to celebrate Audiology Mardi Gras style Oct 12-14th in San Marcos! We already have an amazing line up of speakers and are looking forward to a conference full of learning and fun!

As always, the dinner dance will have a costume contest and be DJ'ed by our favorite DJ Fabian Cuero! So, grab your Krewe, bring your costumes and get ready for some learning and fun.



Diagnostics

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Audiology Advocacy Day!

Alexander Morris, AuD

Vice-President of Legislative Issues, TAA

On March 1, 2023, a group of 16 audiology advocates descended upon our state capitol in Austin to meet with elected officials and use their audiology voice to talk about the future of our profession. Your Texas Academy of Audiology was represented by 14 AuD students (5 hailing from Lamar University, 2 from Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, and 3 from the University of Texas at Dallas), and 6 professionals coming from the DFW, Houston, and Austin metro areas. Because the Texas legislature is only in session for 6 months once every two years, it is critical for us to utilize this opportunity to put a spotlight on audiology. This was our third in-person advocacy trip since 2017 and the group has grown each year!

As a group, we had the opportunity to meet with the TAA lobbyist Brad Shields, Representative Julie Johnson (D-115) and Speaker of the House Rep. Dade Phelan (R-21). Everyone in the group had individual meetings with their elected officials throughout the day, and the students were even able to meet with Katie Bryce at the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. In total we connected with the offices of 20 legislators—a very busy day!

There are several bills up for consideration this year on topics including insurance, the audiology interstate compact, over-the-counter hearing aids, telehealth, and newborn hearing screenings. Our legislators need to hear our expert audiology voice to ensure they have the best information to make decisions that help our profession grow and our patients thrive. First-time advocate Lindsey Sanford of Lamar University said “If I had the opportunity to encourage someone who was on the fence, I would tell them to just do it. It might feel scary, or that you’re going in to talk to someone about something you don’t know much about, but nothing will get done if we don’t do anything.”

Out of 16 people, only four had any kind of prior experience with in-person advocacy. One theme of the day was simply how easy advocacy can be. We are the audiology experts, and there is no one better equipped to have a conversation about ears with policymakers who are paid to listen.

When asked how her experience from March 1st could help inspire other audiologists take the first step in their advocacy journey, Kelsey Spencer of Lamar University gave this advice: “If someone was on the fence about participating in advocacy, I would tell them to just go for it. Decide why they are an audiologist (or an AuD in training) and use that as a reason to spread the word and make the field a better place for them and those coming after.” Dr. Sarah McAlexander of Texas Hearing Institute in Houston added: “I highly recommend that audiologists consider reaching out to their legislators and make their voices heard ... We all have knowledge and experience to share that will help make our state a great place to work and live. In a profession as small as audiology, every voice matters!”

The current 88th Texas Legislature is in session through May 29, 2023. Please use this link to determine your state representative and state senator. Take 3 minutes to call/write to them to let them know you are an audiologist in their district and ask for their support! A list of the bills impacting audiology can be found on the TAA website member portal under “Legislative Updates.” Please send any questions to Gov@texasaudiology.org.

We hope to see you in Austin on our next advocacy day!



Audiology Advocacy Day!

Alexander Morris, AuD

Vice-President of Legislative Issues, TAA

Thanks

TAA REPRESENTATIVES

Alex Morris, AuD

Anna Jilla, AuD, PhD

Adriana Miciak, AuD

Kim Ringer, AuD

Marcos Gracis, AuD

Sarah McAlexander, AuD

Lindsey Sanford – Lamar

Desi Cooper – Lamar

Kelsey Spencer – Lamar

Kaleigh Scott – Lamar

Valerie Valdez – Lamar

Anna Claire Smith – Texas Tech

Caroline Vaughn – Texas Tech

Alexa Zuniga – UT Dallas

Karlee Doak – UT Dallas

Jacqueline Petescia – UT Dallas



TAA Supported Legislation Concerning Audiology in the 88th Texas Legislature

<u>Bill</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Info</u>
HB 109	J. Johnson	Allows a covered patient to select a hearing device that exceeds coverage if they agree to pay the difference
HB 468	S. Thierry	Increases the age of an insured coverage for medically necessary hearing aid or cochlear implant from 18 to 25
HB 1875	R. Guillen	The audiology & speech-language pathology interstate licensure compact provides reciprocity for neighboring states, increasing patient access to care & flexibility for providers
HB 1060	B. Guerra	Implementation of telehealth service programs by public primary and secondary schools. Audiology should be included.
SB 51	J. Zaffirini	Allows a covered patient to select a hearing device that exceeds coverage if they agree to pay the difference
SB 619	N. Johnson	Removes duplicate parental consent for the reporting of failed newborn screening results to the primary resource center and state agencies to improve reporting

Membership Update

Jamie Myers Hand, AuD

VP of Membership

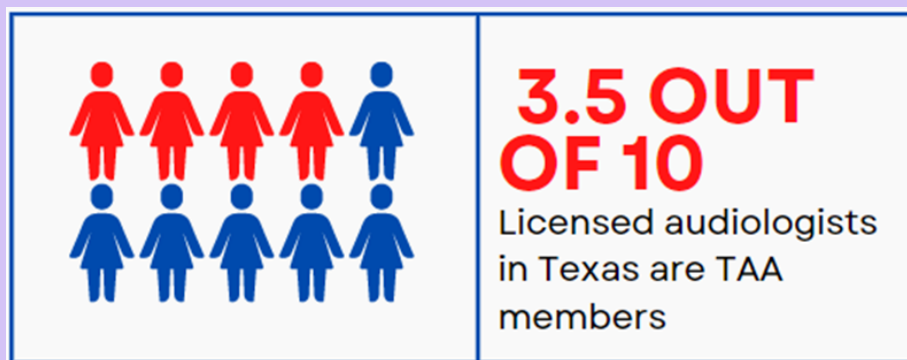
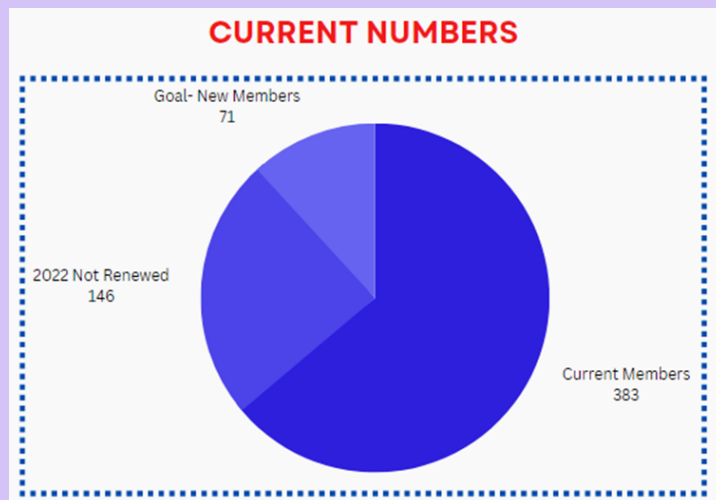
Texas Academy of Audiology

2022 membership ended on a high note with a total of 504 members! We had an increase in Lifetime Membership, which ended up at 62 total. Looking into 2023, we have a large **goal** to reach: **600 members total with 82 new members and 5 new Lifetime Members.**

Currently, we're over half way there, but still have some work to do to regain our memberships from last year and add on 71 new members. Did you know only 3.5 out of every 10 Texas audiologists are in TAA?

If you've ever heard of an issue impacting audiologists and thought "why doesn't somebody do something about that?" that "somebody" is TAA!

I urge you to renew now if you haven't already, and while you're at it, look at your coworker, boss, student, classmate, and mentor and ask them:



"ARE YOU A MEMBER OF TAA?"

YOUR OTC MANUAL

OTC finally became a reality in October 2022. Many in our industry were worried about their disruptive power and how they might drastically change the landscape for audiologists. In response, Fuel developed our OTC manual to let members take back control of the decisions around these products and develop a plan to either incorporate them into the practice or not while ensuring ongoing success.

Scan the QR code to request your copy of the OTC manual.



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The Scoop from The Scott Haug Foundation

Scott Marquardt
Scott Haug Foundation President

Greetings from the Scott Haug Foundation! It's my pleasure to update you on what the foundation is working on this year to both support students and to promote fun at the TAA conference in San Marcos.

This year's Mardi Gras theme will be sure to lend itself to some amazing costumes and fun times. We look forward to seeing who has the best krewe for the Friday evening Dinner/Dance!

The Foundation will once again be organizing a golf tournament and selling shirts at our booth at the conference.

Every year the golf tournament proves to be great fun even if you aren't very good at golf. We hope you'll join us on Thursday morning. The money raised goes directly to support for our outstanding student scholars. More money raised means more funds to support deserving student scholars.

Work has begun collecting nominations for the student scholar awards. Each year we recognize outstanding third-year students from each of our five Texas universities.

Do you know an audiologist who is clearly "different"? Every year the Foundation recognizes an Outstanding Texas Audiologist. In Texas we have many amazing audiologists who deserve to be recognized for their contributions to the profession and to the communities they serve. To learn more about the process of nominating an audiologist for recognition as the Scott Haug Outstanding Texas Audiologist go to:

<https://scotthaug.org/outstanding-texas-audiologist/>

New this year will be the ability to "sponsor a student" when you register for the TAA conference. Our goal is to have every student be able to attend the conference free of charge. You will have the ability to donate to student conference fees when you register for conference.

The Scott Haug Foundation is a 501c3 organization so all donations are tax deductible.

We can't wait to see you in San Marcos Oct 12-14th! Bring your krewe!

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TAA Political action committee (@taa-PAC)

ATTN: TEXAS AUDIOLOGISTS



TAA PAC Needs YOU!!



Kimberly DeBona

@TAA-PAC

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Each year our TAA PAC is here to support the TAA Board in supporting its causes in the State Legislature. We have several bills we are monitoring this legislative session and we need funds to support the legislators who are helping us. Please consider donating to the PAC to help us in our endeavors.

You may go online to the TAA website
https://texasaudiology.org/PAC_Donation
Or you may Venmo with the QR code to the right or
@TAA-PAC last 4 of cell: 7091

Finally, you can mail a check payable to TAA PAC to:

Kimberly DeBona
4016 Tiffany Trl
College Station, TX. 77845

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Medicare Limited Direct Access Provisions for Audiology Services:

What audiologists need to know, for now...

Anna M. Jilla, Au.D., Ph.D.

Jo Mayo Endowed Assistant Professor of Audiology
Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas



Introduction

On January 1, 2023, the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule officially established a new coverage benefit for audiology services. Prior to 2023, all Medicare-covered audiology services required (1) evidence that the procedures are medically necessary, and (2) a physician or other qualified non-physician practitioner (e.g., physician's assistant) order. Effective January 1, 2023, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has instituted a limited direct access provision for select audiology services.

Background

This new limited direct access benefit category did not add or delete any covered services under Traditional Medicare Part B coverage policies. It utilizes a select list (subset) of Part B covered audiology services that can now be reimbursed without a physician or other qualified non-physician practitioner order for **non-acute hearing issues**. The list of limited direct access codes can be found here:

<https://www.audiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/coding-list-1-1.pdf>.

It follows that any audiology services that are not on the audiology limited direct access list will still require a physician order and all covered services under Medicare continue to require support of medical necessity for the evaluation. Audiologists may continue as usual by obtaining an order for all Part B covered audiology services reimbursable through Medicare (see full list of codes for audiology services covered through Medicare here: <https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/audiology-code-list-updated-7522.zip>).

Outlined below are the details of the audiology limited direct access provision under Medicare:

- Effective date: January 1, 2023
- Applies only to Medicare Part B claims and beneficiaries; does not apply to Medicare Advantage
- Provision includes a limited code set of 36 distinct audiology services
- Covered without an order from a physician or other qualified non-physician practitioner
- Only for non-acute hearing issues (e.g., gradual loss of hearing, typically in both ears)
- Benefit can only be used 1x per patient per 12 months (no respect to calendar year)
- Report one or more of the available 36 CPT codes in the limited direct access code subset and append AB modifier to each to indicate it is under the limited direct access benefit
- Will take ~6 months for Medicare to operationalize (~June 2023)

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Medicare Limited Direct Access Provisions for Audiology Services:

What audiologists need to know, for now... (2/3)

Anna M. Jilla, Au.D., Ph.D.

Jo Mayo Endowed Assistant Professor of Audiology
Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas



Table 1. Limited Code Set Available under Audiology Limited Direct Access Provision

92550 Tympanometry & reflex thresh	92582 Conditioning play audiometry
92552 Pure tone audiometry air	92583 Select picture audiometry
92553 Audiometry air & bone	92584 Electrocochleography
92555 Speech threshold audiometry	92587 Evoked auditory test limited
92556 Speech audiometry complete	92588 Evoked auditory tst complete
92557 Comprehensive hearing test	92601 Cochlear implt f/up exam <7
92562 Loudness balance test	92602 Reprogram cochlear implt <7
92563 Tone decay hearing test	92603 Cochlear implt f/up exam 7/>
92565 Stenger test pure tone	92604 Reprogram cochlear implt 7/>
92567 Tympanometry	92620 Auditory function 60 min
92568 Acoustic refl threshold tst	92621 Auditory function + 15 min
92570 Acoustic immitance testing	92625 Tinnitus assessment
92571 Filtered speech hearing test	92626 Eval aud funcj 1st hour
92572 Staggered spondaic word test	92627 Eval aud funcj ea addl 15
92575 Sensorineural acuity test	92640 Aud brainstem implt programg
92576 Synthetic sentence test	92651 Aep hearing status deter i&r
92577 Stenger test speech	92652 Aep thrshld est mlt freq i&r
92579 Visual audiometry (vra)	92653 Aep neurodiagnostic i&r

Credit: American Academy of Audiology, 2023 (see references for link)

Use of the new AB Modifier to indicate use of the new Audiology Limited Direct Access Provision

The AB modifier is a new modifier created for the purposes of tracking claims which use the new audiology limited direct access provision. The AB modifier should be appended to each code that is reported when practitioners are billing Medicare for covered Part B audiology services without an order. The AB modifier is not applicable for codes other than the 36 listed as part of the limited direct access provision. Additional information from the CMS can be found here:

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/mm12982-medicare-physician-fee-schedule-final-rule-summary-cy-2023.pdf>.

Frequency Limitations of the Audiology Limited Direct Access Provision

As mentioned earlier, Medicare Part B beneficiaries are now able to seek care directly with an audiologist for non-acute hearing issues without the need for a physician order. The frequency limitation for this provision is outlined as a one-time-per-year benefit. This yearly benefit renews every 12 months, irrespective of calendar year. For example, if you bill one or more CPT codes with the AB modifier on a certain date, none of the codes on the list of 36 applicable CPT codes will be payable under for another 12 months without an order.

Discussion of Unanswered Questions

Program not yet fully operationalized through CMS: **Our contact with Medicare Administrative Contractors has resulted in current guidance to not submit any more claims for audiology limited direct access until CMS finalizes the system (expected Summer 2023).** Claims processing systems have not yet been updated to handle the AB modifier and issues persist related to placing the audiologist NPI on the CMS 1500 claim form as the ordering provider. We will also discuss the use of the Advance Beneficiary Notification (ABN) below, as they relate to different parts of this new Medicare provision.

Medicare Limited Direct Access Provisions for Audiology Services:

What audiologists need to know, for now... (3/3)

Anna M. Jilla, Au.D., Ph.D.

Jo Mayo Endowed Assistant Professor of Audiology
Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas



Frequency Limitation: CMS has yet to operationalize an online benefit checker. Thus, we are currently uncertain about whether the benefit has been exhausted for any and all beneficiaries seeking services under this new audiology limited direct access provision. Audiologists may hold their claims until the program is operationalized (recommended) or may consider using an Advance Beneficiary Notification (ABN) and appending the GA modifier to indicate that a mandatory ABN was administered. This would allow clinics to collect money from patients at the time of service while the denials and appeals are handled, but when claims are eventually processed successfully, clinics will need to refund any payments to the patient, less copays.

Definition of non-acute hearing issues: The CMS provided an example of non-acute hearing issues (i.e., gradually progressing hearing loss, usually in both ears). This limited direct access provision does not apply to vertigo, vestibular, or balance disorders, nor does it apply to other acute hearing or otologic issues. These patients should have a physician order as their signs and symptoms are not considered non-acute in nature. However, clinicians may also be unsure of whether the signs and symptoms of hearing loss among their patients would meet the criteria of being “non-acute.” CMS has been contacted to request additional clarification and that information is forthcoming. As of current, if audiologists are uncertain about whether signs and symptoms would be “non-acute,” they may consider using an Advance Beneficiary Notification (ABN) and appending the GA modifier to indicate that a mandatory ABN was administered. Clinicians are also reminded that documentation should illustrate the non-acute nature of the hearing issue in their clinical reports.

Conclusion

The Texas Academy of Audiology is working closely with the American Academy of Audiology to request information from the CMS regarding this new audiology limited direct access provision. TAA Members are encouraged to submit questions and comments to professionalissues@texasaudiology.org.

Updates will be provided by the Texas Academy of Audiology through newsletters, email blasts, and TAA Talks presentations as soon as they become available.

Resources

American Academy of Audiology, Codes for Tests that Audiologists can Bill with the AB Modifier for Nonacute Hearing Conditions without a Physician or NPP Order/Referral.

<https://www.audiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/coding-list-1-1.pdf>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Audiology Code List for Part B Services.

<https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/audiology-code-list-updated-7522.zip>.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Summary of Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Rule 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/mm12982-medicare-physician-fee-schedule-final-rule-summary-cy-2023.pdf>.



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Contact us at website@texasaudiology.org with any questions.



TEHDI/ PEDIATRIC WORKING GROUP

President-Elect Update

Stephanie Williams, AuD

President Elect

Texas Academy of Audiology

I am excited to announce that we will be starting a pediatric working group comprised of pediatric audiologists in Texas. Our primary goal will be working toward improving access to care for Deaf and hard of hearing children around the state and working with other stakeholders to improve the loss to follow-up rate in the EHDI program. Our first meeting will be held the first week of May 2023 (exact date TBD) If you are interested in joining us, please email me at stephanie.williams@utdallas.edu.



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