

Subject: Direct Access to Audiology Services

1 Whereas, audiologists are professionals with Master's and/or Doctoral Degrees in audiology who
2 are uniquely educated and trained in the evaluation, assessment, diagnosis, management,
3 treatment and prevention of hearing and balance problems, and
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5 Whereas, audiologists are regulated by state licensure or registration in all fifty states and the
6 District of Columbia, and
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8 Whereas, the Medicare statute recognizes state licensure as the appropriate standard for
9 determining who is a qualified audiologist, and
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11 Whereas, the Office of Personnel Management allows federal employees and Members of
12 Congress to directly access audiologists through the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan, and
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14 Whereas, veteran's, who have completed the necessary requirements to establish eligibility for
15 healthcare services through the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA), have been afforded direct
16 access to audiology services since 1992 and the administration has reported this policy allows the
17 VA to provide high quality, efficient and cost effective hearing care to veterans, and
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19 Whereas, all other third party payers, with the exception of Medicare, allow beneficiaries direct
20 access to audiologists, and
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22 Whereas, audiologists are charged with determining the medical necessity of the diagnostic tests
23 performed when beneficiaries are provided direct access to their services, and
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25 Whereas, the Medicare requirement for an initial physician visit is costly to the Medicare
26 program, and
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28 Whereas, the diagnostic tests performed by the audiologist are required prior to a medical
29 diagnosis by a physician, and
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31 Whereas, sensorineural hearing loss accounts for 90% or more of hearing loss in adult patients,
32 and
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34 Whereas, audiologists are educated to recognize problems requiring medical attention and would
35 immediately refer those patients to a physician for medical treatment, and
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37 Whereas, hearing loss is a major barrier to patients remaining active members of society, and
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39 Whereas, hearing loss left untreated often results in patients suffering from psychosocial disorders
40 including anxiety, isolation and depression, and
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42 Whereas, Medicare beneficiaries do not need a physician referral to see a dentist, oral surgeon,
43 podiatrist, optometrist, chiropractor, clinical nurse specialist, clinical psychologist, clinical; social
44 worker, nurse practitioner or physician assistant,
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46 Resolved, that the American Academy of Audiology supports direct access to audiologists for
47 Medicare beneficiaries and any patient in need of audiology services.
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