



SPEECH & LANGUAGE CONSULTANTS

Speakology LLC
Sarah White M.A. CCC-SLP
Jennifer Lano M.S. CCC-SLP
45 Westwood Drive
Simsbury CT 06070

Speech-Language Pathologist
Speakology LLC
860.608.7366
203.910.6519
sarah@speakology.org
jen@speakology.org

TELEHEALTH TESTIMONY

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LCO 3614.

My name is Jennifer Lano, Speech-Language Pathologist and co-owner of Speakology LLC, a small speech therapy private practice in Avon CT. The executive order of "stay safe, stay home" was one that our company and our medically fragile clients took to heart. Knowing that our clients would potentially be without any services, Sarah and I transformed our business overnight, transferring hundreds of our clients in our care to a teletherapy platform, in the hopes of providing support to our clients in crisis. We were initially disheartened by the news that insurance companies were not seeing the value of our services within a teletherapy platform. To tell families that a capricious decision was made, that their medically necessary services were covered one week and then not covered the next, without explanation, was heartbreaking. With the help of several advocates, state legislatures, and support of fellow private practice owners throughout Connecticut, we were successful in our endeavor of securing insurance coverage with several large insurance companies.

COVID-19 is not going away, and teletherapy coverage is set to expire. We need more than ever to have a unified front and to ask the insurance companies to continue to allow us to do the good work that we do, just via teletherapy. Our clinicians at Speakology have poured their hearts and souls into working with these individuals and their families. Getting a view of their lives, day in and day out, being able to support not only the client in question, but the family surrounding that client, who in their words will tell you, are in crisis mode.

Teletherapy is much more than chatting via FaceTime, it's engaging, meaningful and inclusive of family members who may otherwise be excluded from individual clinic-based therapy sessions. It's exciting and interactive and even the most compromised individuals have been able to respond to our interventions. Via teletherapy we have elicited first words, provided feeding and swallowing interventions, so that a child didn't require hospitalization due to dehydration, as well as provide alternative means of communication, so that a child is not engaging in aggressive behaviors to their siblings and parents who are now quarantined at home. Certainly we can all see the value in these services. Our hope is that all of the insurance companies do as well, having the desire to be on the right side of history by providing care to Connecticut's neediest and most vulnerable population.

The research to support the benefits and necessity of teletherapy is immense, however the real proof is our clients, with 98% of families feeling satisfied and thankful that we were there on the other side of that screen. Teletherapy

should not be viewed as "less than" in person visits. My words today have just as much meaning as they would be if I was standing in front of you, in person.

Any denial of continued teletherapy coverage will also be viewed as an outright denial of the members covered benefits, benefits that they had been accessing without difficulty, prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Can one imagine the regression that would occur if these clients no longer have access to their medically necessary services? It is absolutely unfathomable.

We implore the state of Connecticut, as well as the local insurance companies, to continue to cover telehealth services when provided by Speech-Language Pathologists, and continue to give members, as well as the loyal providers, some much needed relief during this unprecedented situation, especially as we head into the uncertainty of the fall and winter months.

We wish to thank the committee for the opportunity to present testimony in support of LCO 3614. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lano & Sarah White
Speakology LLC