



STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Scope of Practice

The AAO-HNS strongly believes a physician-led hearing healthcare team, with coordination of services, is the best approach for providing the highest quality care to patients. The AAO-HNS also believes it is appropriate for non-physician providers to seek updates to statutes and regulations relating to their defined scope of practice to reflect advances in education and training. However, the AAO-HNS strongly opposes state legislation that would inappropriately expand the scope of practice of non-physician providers beyond their education and training. Enabling non-physician providers to independently diagnose, treat, or manage medical disorders could adversely affect the quality of patient care.

Hearing Aid Services

The coverage of, sale, and dispensing of hearing aids is an issue considered by several states in various forms each legislative year. The AAO-HNS tracks many bills that address the scope of practice of dispensing hearing aids, state insurance mandates for hearing aids, and tax credits and/or exemptions for hearing aids. The merits and potential concerns with these varying proposals are typically evaluated on an individual basis.

Taxes on Medical Procedures

Each year, due to continuing state budget shortfalls, there is a re-emergence of proposals to tax medical procedures. The Stop Medical Taxes Coalition, of which the AAO-HNS is a member, asserts that the taxation of medical procedures is unfair for patients, violates patient privacy, requires physicians to be tax collectors, and is a “slippery slope” towards the taxation of other medical services.

Truth in Advertising

With the emergence of clinical doctorate programs for non-physician providers, which has led to many degree holders referring to themselves as “doctors,” there is growing confusion within the patient population about the level of training and education of their healthcare providers. The AAO-HNS continues to advocate for increased transparency and clarity in patient communications and interactions to help avoid confusion in the healthcare delivery system.

Maintenance of Certification

In recent years, maintenance of certification (MOC) requirements for physicians have received greater scrutiny from policymakers. The process required for recertification has been portrayed as time consuming, expensive, and not directly relevant for some medical practices. Some state lawmakers, in an effort to reduce barriers to delivering medical care, have introduced legislation to remove requirements for MOC from hospital privileging, health insurance network requirements, licensure, and reimbursement. These state efforts have also raised concerns over state intrusion into professional self-regulation. While lifelong learning is essential, the AAO-HNS believes professional self-regulation through continuous learning and assessment must fit within the normal flow of a physician’s practice and be available at a reasonable expense.

Medical Liability Reform

Every year, numerous states consider various tort reform measures, including those related to affidavits of merit, alternative reforms, caps on non-economic damages, defensive medicine issues, expert witnesses, health courts, and/or pre-trial screening panels. The AAO-HNS strongly supports comprehensive medical liability reforms to stabilize and reduce professional liability premiums, ensure continued access to care by patients, and eliminate frivolous lawsuits.

*For more information on state legislative issues or specific measures,
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