

POLICY STATEMENT

How to use HLAA Policy Statements

Through the Hearing Loss Association of America network discuss the various aspects of a particular issue. This can also be an excellent way to educate new members about different aspects of hearing loss. Policy Statements can be published in your chapter newsletter. If one of the Policy Statements reflects a particular issue for your chapter or for some members, a chapter might want to gather a group of members to approach a legislator or government agency for help in addressing the issue and use the Policy Statements for written explanation of the problem.

For example, one of the greatest frustrations people with hearing loss often face is the lack of assistive listening devices. If some of the members of your chapter want to make sure a movie theater or town meeting has listening systems, you might want to visit the theater or town officials using the Policy Statement on hearing assistive technologies. Your personal experiences, your desire to attend the movies or town meetings, and the Policy Statement can often help inform people and persuade them to install assistive listening systems.

Chapters and groups are frequently asked questions about how HLAA feels about cochlear implants, education of children with hearing loss, or other issues. Policy Statements can be distributed to help answer these questions. You may also want to be very proactive (a characteristic of many members!) and send the Policy Statement to relevant leaders in your community. Members can be available to answer questions or discuss the issue in greater depth.

One of the most important places for HLAA Policy Statement papers to be widely disseminated is at the grass-roots level. The more all HLAA members know about our positions and policies and talk about them in their communities, the sooner the world will become a more accessible place for persons with hearing loss. As you know, HLAA Policy Statement papers reflect the needs and desires of our members. They talk about the myriad aspects of hearing loss, and what we need in order to achieve our goals: to successfully live and function in the hearing world and to be able to communicate with our loved ones, succeed in our work, and contribute to our communities. Our Policy Statements, from the provision of assistive listening devices, to universal screening of infants, to training for vocational rehabilitation counselors, are all directed toward these two major goals:

- Ensuring that hard of hearing people, children and parents can benefit from the technology, policies and practices that allow them to succeed; and,

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- Ensuring that the professionals who deliver services truly understand our needs and the barriers we face.

The more you know and talk about HLAA positions, the more effectively you can advocate. As we all know, some advocacy takes place in Washington, D.C., and some in our state capitals. A great deal of it also takes place in our local communities and in HLAA Chapters across the country. When thousands of HLAA members are writing to their congressmen and state legislators, our regulators and professionals, our voices are heard and heeded.

How Do Members Actually Use the Policy Statements?

There are many ways to do that. One is to set aside a chapter meeting to talk about the Policy Statements. You might want to invite a group of audiologists or hearing aid dispensers to share the Policy Statement on hearing aids. This could include the Policy Statement on telecoils, binaural amplification, return policy, and group hearing aid orientation. This could be the start of a great relationship between local audiologists and your chapter. Even more, contact your state Speech and Hearing Association and ask if you can submit a paper for presentation regarding the HLAA Policy Statements on the above issues at their next state convention.

Another Example of Advocating Using an HLAA Policy Statement

Hard of hearing people are very often underserved by the vocational rehabilitation programs in operation throughout the country. This is so because hard of hearing people are not considered severely disabled. Few counselors have the training to understand the broad range of issues that affect hard of hearing people. Invite counselors to a chapter meeting or ask them if you can do a presentation for counselors at your local vocational rehabilitation office. Learning from people who are living with the problem, and who experience difficulty on the job, is the best education that can be provided by those who are helping persons with hearing loss find employment.

HLAA's initiative for children who are hard of hearing opens up many opportunities for chapters to become involved with local school districts and the state department of education. Teachers often do not understand that the educational needs of hard of hearing children are very different than for deaf children. Because HLAA members understand the importance of acoustics, lighting, noise levels, and visual environment, they can speak with authority to educators about what hard of hearing children need in the classroom. Call your local school district to see how hard of hearing children are accommodated. Find out if assistive listening



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devices are provided in the classroom. Are the floors carpeted? Many teachers will welcome the knowledge you have, and parents will be grateful that someone in the community understands hearing aids, residual hearing, telecoils, and hearing assistive listening devices all defined in HLAA Policy Statements and all things their children are or should be experiencing.

At the HLAA Conventions there are many sessions that discuss different aspects of our Policy Statements - and many opportunities to learn more from and share your experiences with other members from all over the country. It was also a chance to let the board of trustees and the HLAA staff know of your concerns and your issues. Even more, HLAA would love to hear how you are using the Policy Statement papers in your chapters. The best ideas are generated by our membership on the local level. Please do not hesitate to contact the HLAA National office.