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Giuliani Appoints Clinician to NYC Post

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani recently appointed ASHA member Jerry Cammarata as the city's new Commissioner for Youth and Community Development.

"Cammarata has spent his life helping our children," said Giuliani in a press release from his office. "His vast experience as an educator will be invaluable as he takes the reins of the city's efforts to protect and nurture our young people."

New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development supports a variety of youth service programs, administers grant funding and the Citizenship New York City Program, and funds such special projects as the NYC Adult Literacy Initiative.

"The time is now for all speech-language pathologists and audiologists to practice in the global world of government and politics so that we may give back to our profession and serve our clients in new and unique ways," Cammarata says.



Jerry Cammarata, at podium, with Mayor Giuliani, at right.

SLP Challenges Medicare Denial of Reimbursement

Clinician Wins Coverage for Dysphagia Treatment

by Mary M. Spracher

Kathy Hoefer, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) for 23 years, works in sub-acute and long-term care throughout northern Georgia. In May 1999 she joined Integra Rehabilitation, based in Dalton, GA. The first patient Hoefer saw in her new job was an 85-year-old long-term care resident with new onset of severe feeding/swallowing difficulty. Staff referred the patient for dysphagia treatment, and Hoefer proceeded to evaluate and treat the patient. But when Hoefer applied for Medicare reimbursement, Integra's fiscal intermediary said the treatment "didn't take the skills of a therapist" and denied reimbursement.

Fortunately, the story does not end there. Hoefer, who felt the denial reflected a misconception

about what an SLP does in dysphagia treatment, went the extra mile to challenge the denial—and won.

"They were basically saying that we could only manage dysphagia, not treat it, and that we could not treat without instrumental studies," Hoefer explains. "I work for a company that is advocating for our patients. The premise is that we have to do what the patient needs, then we work out how to do it within the confines of reimbursement issues. It's a perfect premise, but sometimes hard to do. The company itself is taking an active role in not simply accepting denials but challenging them as appropriate. This set the stage for me—I did not do this alone."