

Newsflash: Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) supervision and scope of practice

Over the course of the past several months, the Board office has been made aware of several alarming instances of SLPA licensure and supervision which violated the Board rules and statutes. We wish to remind all licensees about some of the important aspects of utilizing SLPAs.

- 1. All caseloads are the responsibility of the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP).** The SLP must allow for time to evaluate clients/patients and establish IEPs and plans of care in addition to supervising the SLPAs that are assigned to assist on that caseload. Speech-language pathology assistants may not manage a caseload. The SLP is in charge of determining the plan of care and ensuring positive treatment outcomes, whether treatment is provided by the SLP or the SLPA. The supervising speech-language pathologist is responsible to make all diagnostic and treatment related decisions for all clients on the caseload. SLPAs may not attend IEP meetings unless the supervising SLP is present at the meeting, and may not contact parents or clients without the permission of the supervising SLP.
- 2. It is the responsibility of the SLP to ensure a person is properly trained and licensed to be performing the duties of an SLPA.** Allowing a person to practice without a license (SLPA certificate) is a violation of the professional and ethical standards. This responsibility cannot be delegated to your employer or HR office and in our experience you as a licensee should always independently verify licensure regardless of assurances from other people. Anybody seeking to become an SLPA must first obtain their 100 hours while as a student in a specific academic SLPA practicum course or they must obtain a Provisional SLPA certificate prior to obtaining those 100 hours. Please note that the SLPA Provisional certificate is temporary and is a completely separate precursor to the regular SLPA Certificate (license).
- 3. Licensees must always hold the welfare of the patient paramount and recognize that not all patients can be treated in the same way.** Treating solely by correspondence is a violation of the professional and ethical standards. If a supervising SLP is using telepractice as the only means of providing treatment to their caseload they risk being in violation of the Board's rules and statutes. If they are using telepractice to supervise SLPAs, they must have a mechanism to determine that each client/patient is appropriate for that methodology. Telepractice or live-video conferencing does not excuse a supervising SLP from any of the professional and ethical standards nor the SLPA supervision requirements.
- 4. Supervision requirements must be met for all clients on a caseload.** The minimums are 20% total supervision, **of which a minimum of 10% must be direct supervision.** Direct supervision is "on-site, within sight or sound" or "live video-conference observation and guidance". It is unacceptable for the SLP to be "down the hall or in the building." The SLP must be watching and/or hearing the SLPA treatment session. The SLP is responsible for that treatment, and must directly supervise to ensure the treatment plan is being effectively conducted. There is no requirement for indirect supervision but it can be used to make up any difference in between the required 10% direct and the 20% total supervision. If a SLPA is supervised directly 20% of the time, then they have met both the total and direct supervision requirements.

5. **If services are going to be provided in part by a SLPA, then the patient/parent must be notified in advance that services are to be provided by an SLPA. See **ORS 681.370**.**

6. **Any licensee that has reason to believe that the Professional and Ethical Standards have been violated shall inform the Board.**

We urge you to forward this email to administrators, human resource directors, clinic owners, hospital medical personnel, and any other individuals involved in hiring and supervising speech-language pathology assistants. The issues outlined above are only a few of those that the board has encountered over the last several months. Please study all of the statutes and rules if you are going to employ or supervise SLPAs. Statutes regarding SLPAs can be found here:

https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors681.html.

SLPA rules can be found here:

http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_300/oar_335/335_095.html

The complete set of board rules are here:

http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_300/oar_335/335_tofc.html

Board staff David Linn and Erin Haag are available to answer your questions. We can be contacted at 971-673-0220 or via email at speechaud.board@state.or.us.