



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

**American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**  
**Statement for the Record for the Members of the Utah Occupational and Professional Licensure**  
**Review Committee**  
**Hearing on Chapter 41, Title 58, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Licensing Act**

*July 17, 2018*

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Chairman Weiler, Representative Green, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am Elise Davis McFarland, President of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). On behalf of ASHA, I appreciate the opportunity to state ASHA's support of the maintenance of occupational licensure for audiologists and speech-language pathologists for the record to the Committee's hearing on the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Licensing Act.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 198,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists, speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 1,400 of our members reside in Utah.

### **Overview**

ASHA strongly supports the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Licensing Act. The maintenance of occupational licensure for audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is critical to ensure patient safety and consumer protection. As these health care professionals provide diagnostic and treatment services related to complex medical conditions, licensure provides a critical and necessary means by which to ensure that these professionals possess the technical, scientific, and clinical knowledge required to competently address the health care needs of their patients.

Audiologists and SLPs are autonomous professionals that work directly with clients/patients, and make independent judgments regarding the assessment and treatment of an individual's communication disorder. Graduate education provides audiologists and SLPs with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to practice independently. Those with ASHA certification meet additional competencies. The independent practice of the professions is fully supported and regulated by state licensing entities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All licensing boards recognize and value the autonomous practice of audiologists and SLPs.

Legislative oversight of audiology and speech-language pathology, as provided under Chapter 41, Title 58 of the Utah Code, is consistent with nationwide standards of licensure for these professions and has become the accepted practice for consumer protection nationwide. The public can rely on the expertise and wisdom of practicing professionals to ensure that those in practice are held to high standards as they treat some of the most vulnerable members of our population.

### **Background on Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology**

#### *Professional Qualifications for Audiologists*

Audiologists earn a clinical doctoral degree or AuD in audiology and are highly qualified to conduct comprehensive assessments that determine hearing loss, auditory function, balance, and related systems, and evaluate, select, and dispense hearing aids. Audiologists also assess the candidacy of

individuals with hearing loss for cochlear implants and work with medical teams to provide fitting, mapping, and audiologic rehabilitation to optimize the use of these devices.

#### *Professional Qualifications for SLPs*

SLPs are highly skilled professionals who hold a master's degree in communication disorders from an accredited program recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. SLPs complete a challenging education and training program, a supervised clinical fellowship, and must pass a nationally standardized examination.

SLPs assess, treat, and help prevent a variety of communication disorders involving speech, language, fluency (e.g., stuttering), voice and resonance problems, cognitive communication disorders such as memory, attention, and problem-solving disorders, and swallowing and associated feeding disorders. SLPs provide services in a variety of practice settings ranging from schools to institutions such as hospitals and rehabilitation centers, early intervention programs, and private practice.

#### *ASHA Certification: Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC)*

ASHA certification ensures competencies for audiologists and SLPs. The CCC is earned through a voluntary certification process; therefore, the requirements of certificate holders are only applicable to those who choose to be certified. ASHA has no legal recourse against those who violate the ASHA Code of Ethics other than to revoke their certification. In the absence of state authority over the practice of audiology and speech-language pathology, an individual may continue to practice despite unethical or incompetent service.

To maintain their certification, audiologists and SLPs must complete professional development activities every three years.

#### *Licensure and ASHA Certification*

Both licensure and ASHA certification help ensure the quality provision of audiology and speech-language pathology services. State licensure provides consumer protection and recourse against incompetent practitioners and/or those acting in an unethical manner so that they may be removed from practice. ASHA certification is the fundamental standard among major health professions and the most widely recognized symbol of competency for audiologists (CCC-A) and SLPs (CCC-SLP). Individuals holding the CCCs are expected to abide by ASHA's Code of Ethics. While licensure is important to legally perform our work, certification is important for internal professional recognition and external accountability.

#### **Conclusion**

ASHA strongly supports the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Licensing Act, and appreciates this opportunity to convey the critical importance that licensure of the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology have in ensuring patient safety and consumer protection.