

Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPA)

Who are Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs)?

SLPAs are support personnel who, following academic preparation, serve as members of educational teams in school-based settings and are specifically trained to supplement -- not supplant -- the services of certified speech-language pathologists.

What credentials are available for SLPAs from the Colorado Department of Education?

In September, 2003 the Colorado Department of Education was approved to offer a Type 1 Authorization: School Speech-Language Pathology Assistant ages 0-21. To qualify for this authorization SLPAs must have 1) a Bachelor's Degree in Speech-Communication, Speech-Language Pathology or Communication Disorders/Speech Sciences from an accredited institution of higher education; 2) completed a school speech-language pathology assistant program that meets or exceeds the American Speech-Language- Hearing (ASHA) guidelines; and 3) completed a minimum of 100 clock hours of school field experiences supervised by a certified speech-language pathologist.

Does ASHA credential SLPAs?

No. As of December, 2003 ASHA discontinued their national SLPA certification process due to funding cuts.

Can SLPAs replace speech-language pathologists?

No. Assistants cannot replace qualified speech-language pathologists. Their role is to support the clinical services provided by the SLP. According to the state authorization no one can employ a speech-language pathology assistant without a certified speech-language pathologist as supervisor.

What may speech-language pathology assistants do?

An SLPA **may** conduct the following tasks under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist:

- **assist** the SLP with speech-language and hearing screenings and assessments (without interpretation)
- **follow documented treatment or intervention plans** or protocols developed by the supervising SLP
- **document student performance** (e.g. tally data for the SLP to use; prepare charts, records, graphs) and report this information to the SL-
- **assist with clerical duties** and departmental operations, such as preparing materials and scheduling activities as directed by the SLP
- **perform checks and maintenance** of equipment
- **support** the SLP in research project, in-service trainings, and public relations programs
- **collect data** for quality improvement

What is outside of the speech-language pathology assistants' scope of responsibilities?

An SLPA **may not** perform the following tasks:

- **administer diagnostic tests**, conduct evaluations or interpret test results
- **screen or diagnose students for feeding/swallowing disorders**
- **participate in parent conferences or team meetings** without a certified SLP being present
- **provide counseling** for students, parents or families
- **write, develop or modify** a student's individualized intervention plan
- **sign** any formal documents
- **select or dismiss students** for/from services
- **disclose clinical or confidential information** to anyone other than the supervising SLP
- **represent** himself or herself as a speech-language pathologist

What is the average salary for SLPAs?

Nationally, SLPAs are paid as B.A. level school employees, averaging about 60% to 75% of professional level salaries. In Colorado, some school districts pay SLPAs on a general education teacher salary schedule.

Who is responsible for services provided by a speech-language pathology assistant?

The fully qualified, certified supervising speech-language pathologist is responsible for services provided by assistants. For the purposes of Medicaid billing, check with your district's Medicaid consultant.

How much supervision is recommended?

The amount and type of supervision required should be based on the skills and experience of the speech-language pathology assistant, the needs of the students served, the service setting

(e.g. classroom or resource room) and the tasks assigned. The minimum amount of supervision suggested by the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) is 30% weekly (at least 20% direct) for the first 90 workdays and 20% (at least 10% direct) after the initial work period. Direct supervision means on-site, in-view observation and guidance by a speech-language pathologist while an assigned activity is being performed by support personnel. It is also recommended that an SLP supervise no more than three SLPAs.

How can I find qualified SLPAs?

In most cases they will find you, if an SLPA position is posted in your district. You can also contact local institutions of higher education who offer this training program or the state Speech-Language Consultant at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).