



## STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY

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### POSITION STATEMENT FOR SUPERVISING LICENSED ASSISTANTS IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

#### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance related to the use of speech-language pathology assistants in the delivery of speech-language services.

The Act and the Board Rules allow speech-language pathology assistants to assist in the delivery of speech-language services and to augment program and treatment activities under the supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist. Although the speech-language pathologist may delegate specific tasks to the assistant, the legal and ethical responsibility for all services remains with the supervising speech-language pathologist at all times. Speech-language pathology assistants cannot be assigned to or be responsible for their own caseloads. The purpose of the speech-language pathology assistant is not to increase caseload size, but to manage existing caseloads under the direct responsibility of the licensed speech-language pathologist supervisor.

#### REFERENCES:

The Act: Texas Occupations Code (TOC), Chapter 401, §401.312  
Board Rules: 22 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 741  
Subchapter D, §741.41 relating to the Professional Responsibilities of License Holders  
Subchapter D, §741.43 relating to Recordkeeping and Billing  
Subchapter D, §741.44 relating to Requirements, Duties, and Responsibilities of Supervisors  
Subchapter E, §741.64 relating to Requirements for an Assistant in Speech-Language Pathology License

*(NOTE: Failure to follow the requirements of the Act and Board Rules shall result in disciplinary action being proposed by the Board against both the supervising speech-language pathologist and the assistant.)*

#### RESPECTIVE DUTIES OF THE SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST AND ASSISTANT:

The speech-language pathology assistant may not practice until the Board has received and approved a Supervisory Responsibility Statement (SRS) which has been completed and signed by both the licensed speech-language pathologist supervisor and the speech-language pathology assistant. In addition, only licensed speech-language pathologists who have practiced for at least three (3) years may serve as supervisors. Written requests for exemptions to this three year professional requirement for speech-language pathologist supervisors must be submitted to the Board for consideration and approval

Provided that the training, supervision, documentation, and planning are appropriate, the following tasks may be delegated to a speech-language pathology assistant: implementing treatment programs designed by the supervising speech-language pathologist; providing carry-over activities; collecting data and documenting performance; maintaining clinical records; preparing clinical materials; and administering routine tests, but not interpreting test results or determining severity of the communication disorder. The licensed speech-language pathology assistant shall abide by the decisions made by the supervising

speech-language pathologist relating to the assistant's scope of practice. In the event the speech-language pathologist supervisor requests that the speech-language pathology assistant violate Board Rules, the Texas Occupations Code, or any other law, the speech-language pathology assistant shall refuse to do so and immediately notify the Board office and any other appropriate authority.

The licensed speech-language pathologist must conduct evaluations, interpret test results, determine case selection, design treatment programs, provide written or oral reports (e.g., progress notes, diagnostic reports) regarding patient/client status, make referrals, and participate in interdisciplinary team meetings (e.g., Annual Review Dismissal (ARD)'s, Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) conferences, and discharge staffings) for all patients/clients being served in the entire caseload. Under the new rule changes enacted March, 2006, under §741.64(i), the speech-language pathology assistant may represent special education and speech pathology at ARD meetings with specific stipulations in place including: the speech-language pathology assistant must have at least three (3) years experience as a speech-language pathology assistant in the schools; the speech-language pathology assistant may attend, with written approval of the supervising speech-language pathologist, the annual ARD meeting of a student for which he/she provides therapy services; the supervisor must attend if the purpose of the ARD meeting is to initiate special education speech-language services, to develop the student's initial Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or if the meeting is convened to discuss dismissal from speech language services; the speech-language pathology assistant shall present IEP goals and objectives that have been developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist and reviewed by the parent; and the speech-language pathology assistant shall discontinue the ARD meeting and contact the supervising speech-language pathologist when questions or changes arise regarding the IEP document. Additional requirements for supervising speech-language pathologists are listed in §741.64(j).

#### **PROVIDING ADEQUATE SUPERVISION:**

To ensure quality service, the supervising speech-language pathologist must be provided adequate time for all aspects of managing the caseload. Because of the time required for training and supervising speech-language pathology assistants, it will be necessary to reduce the number of patients/clients directly served by the licensed speech-language pathologist in relation to the number of assistants being supervised. Variables that affect the maximum number of individuals (4) who can be supervised appropriately by the licensed speech-language pathologist, may include, but are not limited to:

- a. the number of hours per week the speech-language pathologist and speech-language assistant(s) are employed;
- b. specific tasks assigned to speech-language pathology assistants (e.g., number, severity, and types of cases for whom they are implementing treatment plans);
- c. time required of the supervising speech-language pathologist in direct service provision;
- d. the experience level of the speech-language pathologist supervisor and speech-language assistant(s);
- e. the time limits imposed by supervision requirements (**minimum two hours per week**);
- f. the number of locations in which services are provided and travel time between locations; and
- g. other roles and responsibilities assigned to the supervising speech-language pathologist (e.g., supervising interns, attending staff meetings, and fulfilling other campus/district/agency assignments).

The supervising speech-language pathologist should be the *only* professional to decide how many, if any, speech-language pathology assistants he/she can supervise and still ensure that all services are provided in compliance with Board Rules and the Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 401. If services are not provided in accordance with these rules, and a complaint is filed, the supervising speech-language pathologist may be subject to disciplinary action.

In the event the supervising speech-language pathologist ceases supervision of the speech-language pathology assistant, the speech-language pathologist supervisor must notify the Board in writing of this change and the speech-language pathology assistant must stop practicing immediately. The supervising speech-language pathologist shall be responsible for the practice of the speech-language pathology assistant until the supervisor notifies the Board of this change.

#### **AMOUNT OF SUPERVISION REQUIRED:**

The supervising speech-language pathologist must supervise the speech-language pathology assistant two hours per week, **whether the speech-language pathology assistant works full or part-time**. At least one-half of the minimum supervision requirements (i.e., one hour per week) must be met through face-to-face observation, at the location where the speech-language pathology assistant is employed; the other half can be accomplished through audio/videotaping, telephone communication, e-mail, or other means of reporting.

#### **DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:**

The supervising speech-language pathologist must maintain documentation of regularly scheduled observation and evaluation of the speech-language pathology assistant's performance. These records of supervision, and a job description for the speech-language pathology assistant, must be provided to the Board upon request.

#### **SUMMARY: MAJOR POINTS**

- Speech-language pathology assistants **do not** have their own caseloads; they assist the licensed speech-language pathologist in managing an existing caseload by implementing documented treatment plans. (Also see Board Position Statement, "Position Statement for Caseload Size in the Schools". Board Position Statements and Frequently Asked Questions available on the Board's webpage at: [www.dshs.state.tx.us/speech](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/speech) )
- Speech-language pathology assistants may administer routine tests (if the supervising speech-language pathologist has determined that the speech-language pathology assistant has the training, experience, and competence), but they may not interpret test results, determine severity of the communication disorder, or make case selection decisions. The supervising licensed speech-language pathologist is responsible for ensuring that test administration follows the publisher's instructions (e.g., the examiner must have a graduate degree).
- The supervising speech-language pathologist shall make all initial contact with each patient/client served by the speech-language pathology assistant (contact with the patient/client may include evaluation).
- Speech-language pathology assistants may not attend any interdisciplinary team meetings (e.g., ARD's, IFSP conferences, discharge staffings) without the physical presence of the supervising speech-language pathologist except as specified in the section regarding representation of special education and speech pathology at ARD meetings [see §741.64(i) and §741.64 (j)]. Speech-Language Pathology Assistants who attend ARD meetings with their speech-language pathologist supervisor may sign the IEP as "in attendance" but shall not check the "agree/disagree" column.
- Speech-language pathology assistants must be supervised two hours per week, regardless of the number of hours they are employed. At least one hour of supervision per week must be face-to-face, in the location where the speech-language pathology assistant works. The licensed speech-language pathologist must maintain supervision and performance records that may be requested by the Board.

- Speech-language pathology assistants should not use “SLP-A” as an indicator of their credentials. They may use “Assistant SLP” or “SLP Assistant” if they need to shorten the title.
- Before allowing a speech-language pathology assistant to practice, the speech-language pathologist must verify the speech-language pathology assistant holds a valid license, the speech-language pathologist has been approved to supervise the speech-language pathology assistant and the Board has received and approved a completed and signed Supervisory Responsibility Statement (SRS).

While speech-language pathology assistants provide carry-over activities and prepare clinical materials, these tasks may also be performed by other personnel. For example, a classroom aide might provide models for language targets during class activities, prepare picture cards for a communication system, or program a communication device. These activities are not considered “speech-language therapy” and do not count toward the speech-language services specified in a student’s IEP.

We can be contacted by regular mail at:

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