

NM SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSISTANT TASK FORCE

The task force is made up of speech-language pathologists from across the state who practice in different settings (medical, private practice, schools, and university). The task force was set up to develop an “SLP-Assistant Bill” with scope of practice, supervision requirements, etc. The task force first met in December, 2019 and are continuing to meet as frequently as two times per month. At least 10 SLPs meet regularly.

Topics of discussion:

Scope of practice in all settings

- Education/Initial ASHA certification/initial State Licensure
- What an SLP-Assistant will be able to do?
- What an SLP-Assistant will not be able to do?

Supervision

- Initially licensed SLP-Assistant – more supervision
- After 2-3 years of experience – a little less supervision
- Two levels of licensure?
- Looking at supervision for working with birth to adults
 - Including supervision in private and public clinics
 - Including supervision via teleconference

Who will be willing to supervise an SLP-Assistant?

- It was noted that many SLPs might not be willing or interested in supervising an SLP-Assistant because of the added work!!
- **Goal: Not to add more to the already overfilled plate of the SLP.** Could an SLP use an SLP-Assistant working side by side with her/him? In the schools where caseloads are out of control and SLPs are working more than the 8-4 hours would an SLP-Assistant be a benefit?

What is the purpose of the SLP-Assistant?

To assist the SLP and not be a substitute SLP—this has been discussed over and over.

- How could an SLP-Assistant help an SLP in the **medical setting**?
 - Working side by side with the SLP, the SLP-Assistant could help client prepare by completing initial paperwork or prepare for therapy by completing specific exercises designed by the SLP, set up materials, sanitize or clean materials, take data, etc.
- How could an SLP-Assistant help an SLP in the **school setting**?
 - Working side by side with the SLP, the SLP-Assistant could work with the SLP to **provide assistance with mechanical,**

repetitive, and routine therapy. The SLP-Assistant could “cover” therapy for SLP when attending IEPs, Staffings, etc. (This would alleviate the need for make-up therapy time).

Discussion regarding assigning SLP-Assistants in remote areas and having a supervisor supervise by going out to “supervise” has been a point of heated discussion as **some members of the task force express that SLP-Assistants should not be substitute SLPs--- while others express SLP-Assistants should be given the freedom to work independently after being trained by an SLP for the first two to three years with ??? supervision.** (This discussion is brought up at every meeting!)

The task force has dedicated a great deal of time reviewing and amending ASHA’s SLP-Assistant Scope of Practice to meet NM clients/students/patients’ needs. It was decided that the **initial credentialing for an SLP-Assistant by ASHA will be the minimal criteria used by NM at the initial licensing** of an SLP-Assistant.

The task force has been reviewing each line of the ASHA’s SLP-Assistants Scope of Practice vigilantly and coming to an agreement on its edition. They are meticulously reviewing each section, deciding what should stay, changed, or deleted. Each item is voted on directly after the discussion. Discussions sometimes are very long while other times quite short as everyone is in agreement.

Other issues:

1. Caseload limits need to be addressed with PED—NMSHA should address this with PED – may need another committee to work on this. SLPs in most areas are working more than their 8-4 hours. SLPs in several districts are working excessive hours after hours to complete reports, document, etc. Some districts primary focus is Medicaid billing not always meeting the students’ needs.
2. Advocate for SLPs in the Schools is necessary! A need to advocate across the state with NMSHA– Let’s give a voice to all SLPs.

If you are interested in attending a meeting or joining the task force, please contact Toni Trujillo at yuccatherapyservices@gmail.com