

## Virginia Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

### Guidance for the Use and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs)

The Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology often receives questions regarding the use of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants. The most frequently asked questions are the following:

- 1) **Question:** What is the scope of practice for an SLPA?
- 2) **Question:** Are all individuals that assist an SLP an SLPA?
- 3) **Question:** How many assistants may an SLP supervise?
- 4) **Question:** Can an SLPA implement treatment services?
- 5) **Question:** How often must the SLP observe and evaluate the SLPA implementing the treatment services?
- 6) **Question:** Is the SLP required to observe and evaluate at least two client sessions every 30 days for each client for which an SLPA is implementing treatment services?
- 7) **Question:** May an SLP provide onsite supervision of an SLPA via tele-supervision?
- 8) **Question:** Must the SLP who provides direct treatment and provides treatment plans to the SLPA also provide the supervisory observations of the SLPA?
- 9) **Question:** How often is the SLP required to provide services to a client that utilizes SLPAs?

#### Guidance

- 1) **Question:** What is the scope of practice for an SLPA?

**Response:** The [Regulations Governing the Practice of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology](#) define the scope of practice for an SLPA to be the following:

***18VAC30-21-140. Supervisory responsibilities; supervision of unlicensed assistants.***

*C. Scope of practice of a speech-language pathologist assistant. After demonstration and documentation of competency for the duties to be assigned, an assistant shall only engage in those duties planned, designed, and supervised by a licensed speech-language pathologist, to include the following:*

- 1. Assist with speech, language, and hearing screenings without clinical interpretation of results.*
- 2. Assist during assessment of a client exclusive of administration or interpretation.*
- 3. Perform activities for each session that are routine and do not require professional judgment, in accordance with a plan developed and directed by the speech-language pathologist who retains the professional responsibility for the client.*

4. Document a client's performance and report information to the supervising speech-language pathologist.
5. Assist with programming augmentative and alternative communication devices and assist the client in repetitive use of such devices.
6. Sign or initial informal treatment notes and, upon request, co-sign formal documents with the supervising speech-language pathologist.
7. Engage in the following activities:
  - a. Preparing materials;
  - b. Scheduling appointments and activities;
  - c. Preparing charts, records, or graphs and performing other clerical duties;
  - d. Performing checks and maintenance of equipment; and
  - e. Assisting a client with transitioning to and from therapy sessions.
8. Perform duties not otherwise restricted to the practice of speech-language pathology.

**2) Question:** Are all individuals that assist an SLP an SLPA?

**Response:** Not all individuals that assist an SLP are SLPAs. An assistant that performs any of the duties defined in the scope of practice for an SLPA found in [18VAC30-21-140\(1-6\)](#) and [\(8\)](#) is an SLPA. Individuals that **only** assist by performing functions listed in [18VAC30-21-140\(7\)](#) do not need to be an SLPA.

**3) Question:** How many assistants may an SLP supervise?

**Response:** An SLP may supervise the equivalent of two full-time speech-language pathology assistants.

The [Regulations Governing the practice of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology](#) state the following:

**18VAC30-21-140. Supervisory responsibilities; supervision of unlicensed assistants.**

*E. Supervision of an assistant in speech-language pathology.*

1. ... A speech-language pathologist shall only supervise the equivalent of two full-time assistants.

**4) Question:** Can an SLPA implement treatment services?

**Response:** An SLPA may implement treatment services planned and developed by their supervising SLP.

**5) Question:** How often must an SLP observe and evaluate an SLPA implementing the treatment services?

**Response:** The supervising SLP must provide documented onsite supervision of at least two client sessions for each SLPA every 30 days. This is to directly observe and evaluate the performance of the SLPA. The onsite supervision requirement is distinctly different from the requirement for the SLP to provide services to all clients provided in Question 9.

The [Regulations Governing the Practice of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology](#) state the following:

**18VAC30-21-140. Supervisory responsibilities; supervision of unlicensed assistants.**

*E. Supervision of an assistant in speech-language pathology.*

*2. The speech-language pathologist shall provide the level of supervision to the speech-language pathologist assistant necessary to ensure quality of care to include onsite supervision of at least two client sessions for each assistant being supervised every 30 days to directly observe and evaluate the performance of the assistant. The speech-language pathologist shall document such onsite observation and evaluation in the client record for each session.*

**6) Question:** Is the SLP required to observe and evaluate at least two client sessions every 30 days for each client for which an SLPA is implementing treatment services?

**Response:** No, the SLP is required to provide onsite supervision of a minimum of least two client sessions per SLPA every 30 days as provided in the response to Question 4.

**7) Question:** May an SLP provide onsite supervision of an SLPA via tele-supervision?

**Response:** Onsite supervision may occur in-person, face-to-face; or via a real-time, audio and visual electronic communication method that is synchronous, (real-time) in which the SLP, SLPA and client may visually see and verbally communicate with one another.

Recordings of SLPAs working with clients are not “real-time” and do not satisfy this requirement.

**8) Question:** Must the SLP who provides direct treatment and provides treatment plans to the SLPA also provide the supervisory observations of the SLPA?

**Response:** The SLP providing treatment to a client and planning treatment for the SLPA to implement to the client is required to conduct the supervisory observations. In the event the SLPA works for multiple SLPs, each SLP must observe and supervise 2x/month to ensure standard of care for the clients under their treatment.

**9) Question:** How often is the SLP required to provide services to a client that utilizes SLPAs?

**Response:** The treating SLP must meet with each client receiving services from the SLPA at least once every 30 days to provide treatment and to aid in their planning and development of treatment to be implemented by the SLPA.

The [Regulations Governing the Practice of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology](#) state the following:

***18VAC3021-140. Supervisory responsibilities; supervision of unlicensed assistants.***

*A. Responsibility of a licensee.*

*2. A licensed speech-language pathologist who supervises unlicensed assistants shall document such supervision, shall be held fully responsible for their performance and activities, and shall ensure that they perform only those activities that do not constitute the practice of speech-language pathology and that are commensurate with their level of training.*

*b. The frequency in which the speech-language pathologist personally delivers treatment or services to a client who is receiving some services from an assistant shall be up to the professional judgment of the speech-language pathologist and shall be determined by the treatment needs of the client, the type of services being provided, and the setting in which the client is being served, but shall occur at least every 30 days.*