

Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional

In accordance with the ND administrative rules process, the ND Department of Public Instruction implemented the Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Paraprofessional position. The information in this document presents the new administrative rule information in *italics*. In addition to this information, the Department has presented best practice guidance relating to the usage of the SLP Paraprofessional in ND schools. The information presented in this guidance document is from the SLP Pilot Project Guidelines that were created from American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) documents relating to SLP Assistants.

1. What is a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional?

A Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Paraprofessional is defined as an individual who meets the qualifications established through the ND administrative rules process. The minimum requirements for the SLP Paraprofessional are an associate's degree that includes the curriculum components listed below. These qualifications are less than those established as necessary for licensure as a speech-language pathologist, thus the SLP Paraprofessional does not act independently. The SLP Paraprofessional must work under the direction and supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist.

2. What are the qualifications to receive a Certificate of Completion to become a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional?

As stated in the administrative rule, the SLP Paraprofessional must *have completed an associate's or bachelor's degree that incorporates:*

- a. Thirty hours of general college education including oral and written communication skills, mathematics, psychology and the biological and health sciences;*
- b. Thirty hours of college education in the area of speech-language pathology including classes in anatomy, physiology of speech, language, swallowing and hearing mechanisms, communication development, introduction of clinical processes, and fundamentals of human behavior management; and*
- c. A minimum of one hundred clock hours of fieldwork experience which is supervised by a qualified speech-language pathologist.*

3. How does someone apply for a Certificate of Completion in Speech-Language Pathology?

A candidate for a Certificate of Completion in speech-language pathology must complete an application provided through the Department of Public Instruction, Office of Special Education. In addition to the application, the candidate must provide a current transcript of coursework that includes documentation of fieldwork experience.

4. What age groups can the Speech-Language Pathologist Paraprofessional work with?

The SLP Paraprofessional can provide services *in a school setting from early childhood through grade twelve*. This may include students ages three through twenty-one. In ND students may attend public school if he/she has not reached the age of twenty-one before September first of the year of enrollment.

5. How is a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional different from a Speech-Language Pathology Aide?

Aides differ from SLP Paraprofessionals in the degree of training and, correspondingly, in the types of responsibilities that can be assigned to them. The SLP Paraprofessional position requires a two-year associates degree whereas an aide receives on the job training. An aide may complete tasks such as setting up a room for a work session, prepare materials or order supplies. The SLP Paraprofessional provides a wider variety of support services under the direct control of the supervising speech-language pathologist. (See question # 13)

6. Why does the new administrative rule use the term paraprofessional instead of assistant?

The SLP Paraprofessional position was previously called a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant. The term paraprofessional is used in order to be in agreement with the current statute pertaining to this type of position within the Department of Public Instruction.

The statute states: *The superintendent of public instruction may adopt rules governing the issuance of... certificate of completion for paraprofessionals.*

7. Who can supervise a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional?

The supervising speech-language pathologist must *hold a current restricted educator's professional license for speech-language pathology at the master's degree level as issued by the North Dakota education standards and practices board or holds a current speech-language pathology license issued by the North Dakota state board of examiners in audiology and speech-language pathology.*

8. How many years of experience must the supervising Speech-Language Pathologist have?

The supervising speech-language pathologist must have a *minimum of one year of full-time experience providing speech- language services since receiving their license.*

9. Does the supervising Speech-Language Pathologist need to have coursework in supervision?

The current administrative rules do not address the amount of supervision coursework required for the supervising speech-language pathologist. It is recommended that the supervising speech-language pathologist have completed at least 10 clock hours (coursework, conference, workshop) pertaining to the supervision of support personnel in speech-language pathology.

10. How many Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessionals can the licensed Speech-Language Pathologist supervise?

The licensed speech-language pathologist may *supervise no more than two paraprofessionals* at one time. As the supervisory responsibilities of the supervising speech-language pathologist increase, the clinical responsibilities of the supervisor must decrease.

11. Who has the legal and ethical responsibility for the students that the Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional works with?

Although the supervising speech-language pathologist delegates specific tasks to the SLP Paraprofessional, *the speech-language pathology paraprofessionals may only provide speech-language pathology paraprofessional services under the direct control of a supervising speech-language pathologist.* The legal and ethical responsibility to the student for all services provided or omitted cannot be delegated; it must remain the sole responsibility of the supervising speech-language pathologist. Activities may be assigned only under the guidance and control of the supervising speech-language pathologist and should be constrained by the scope of responsibilities for the SLP Paraprofessional.

12. Should the name and services being provided by the SLP Paraprofessional be documented on the IEP?

Yes, the SLP Paraprofessional must not represent himself or herself as a speech-language pathologist. The parent/student must be informed that the services are being provided by the SLP Paraprofessional. The name and the services being provided by the SLP Paraprofessional must be documented on the IEP as well as the speech-language pathology supervisor.

13. What can a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional do?

Speech-language pathology paraprofessionals may only provide speech-language pathology paraprofessional services under the direct control of a supervising speech-language pathologist.

A speech-language pathology paraprofessional may:

- a. Provide speech-language screenings, without interpretation, following specified screening protocols developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;*
- b. Perform documented tasks developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;*
- c. Document student's progress toward meeting objectives and report this information to the supervising speech-language pathologist; and*
- d. Prepare materials, perform scheduling and maintain space or equipment.*

14. What duties are Speech-Language Paraprofessionals prohibited from doing?

A speech-language pathology paraprofessional may not:

- a. Make independent decisions regarding changes on the student's individual program;*
- b. Perform standardized or nonstandardized diagnostic tests, formal or informal evaluations or interpret test results;*
- c. Take referrals or dismiss students from a caseload;*
- d. Participate in conferences, or other multidisciplinary team meetings without the presence of the supervising speech-language pathologist;*
- e. Disclose confidential information either orally or in writing to anyone not designated by the supervising speech-language pathologist;*
- f. Provide counseling to the student or family regarding a communication disorder;*

g. Prepare or sign any formal documentation including an individualized education program or an assessment plan as a supervising speech language pathologist; or
h. Maintain their own caseload.

15. What are some of the suggested responsibilities of the supervising Speech-Language Pathologist when supervising a Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional?

The supervising speech-language pathologist should:

- Participate in the ongoing performance appraisal of the SLP Paraprofessional(s)
And participate in the hiring of the SLP Paraprofessional(s)
- Document training and supervision of the SLP Paraprofessional to ensure that she or he only performs tasks within the scope of responsibility of the SLP Paraprofessional.
- Attend all meetings pertaining to students on their caseload, this would not preclude the SLP Paraprofessional from attending these meetings along with the supervising speech-language pathologist as a member of the team;
- Make all clinical decisions, including determining referrals and dismissal from caseloads;
- Communicate with students, parents and family members;
- Conduct diagnostic evaluation, assessments, or appraisals, and interpret obtained data in reports;
- Prepare each student’s plan and review these plans with the SLP Paraprofessional at least weekly;
- Delegate specific tasks to the SLP Paraprofessional while retaining legal and ethical responsibility for all services provided or omitted;
- Sign all formal documents;
- Review and sign all informal progress notes prepared by the SLP Paraprofessional; and
- Provide training to the SLP Paraprofessional on the job.

16. What is considered direct and indirect supervision?

As defined in the ASHA document, *Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Scope of Practice*, “Direct supervision means on-site, in-view observation and guidance by an SLP while an assigned activity is performed by support personnel. Direct supervision performed by the supervising SLP may include, but is not limited to, the following: observation of a portion of the screening or treatment procedures performed by the SLPA, coaching the SLPA, and modeling for the SLPA. The supervising SLP must be physically present during all services provided to a medically fragile client by the SLPA (e.g., general and telesupervision). The SLP can view and communicate with the patient and SLPA live viareal time telecommunication technology to supervise the SLPA, giving the SLP the opportunity to provide immediate feedback.” The document defines indirect supervision as “the supervising SLP is not at the same facility or in close proximity to the SLPA, but is available to provide supervision by electronic means. Indirect supervision activities performed by the supervising SLP may include, but are not limited to, demonstration, record review, review and evaluation of audio or videotaped sessions, and interactive television and supervisory conferences that may be conducted by telephone, e-mail, or live webcam.”

17. What is the recommended amount of supervision for the Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional?

The supervision requirements recommended are minimum requirements for each SLP Paraprofessional supervised. At times, it may be appropriate to provide more supervision in order to assure that quality services are being provided; this will depend on the skills and experience of the SLP Paraprofessional, the needs of the student(s), the task assigned, and other factors. Training and supervisory time must be provided

whenever the SLP Paraprofessional begins services with a new student(s) at any time throughout the school year.

Recommended Initial Supervision Period – 90 Days

At least 20% direct and 10% indirect supervision is recommended for the first 90 days. (For a typical 32-hour school workweek, this would be 10 hours for both direct and indirect supervision.) Supervision days and time of day (morning/afternoon) should be alternated to ensure that all students receive direct contact with the supervising speech-language pathologist at least once every 2 weeks.

Direct supervision of the student's services should be not less than 20% of the actual student contact time per week. This supervision is recommended for each SLP Paraprofessional. This ensures that the supervisor will have direct contact time with the SLP Paraprofessional as well as the student. During each week, the supervisor should review data on every student seen by the SLP Paraprofessional. In addition, the direct supervision should be scheduled so that all students seen by the SLP Paraprofessional are directly supervised in a timely manner. Direct supervision should provide information about the quality of the SLP Paraprofessional's performance of assigned tasks and should verify that activities are limited to tasks specified in the assistant's scope of responsibilities.

Indirect supervision is recommended not less than 10% of the actual student's contact time and may include demonstration, record review, review and evaluation of audio or videotaped sessions, interactive television, and/or supervisory conferences that may be conducted by telephone.

Changes in direct and indirect supervision, below or beyond the minimum of 30% recommended the first 90 workdays, will depend on the skills of the SLP Paraprofessional and the needs of the student. This must be decided on a case-by-case basis by the supervising speech-language pathologist.

Whenever the SLP Paraprofessional's performance is judged by the supervising speech-language pathologist to be unsatisfactory, the SLP Paraprofessional should be retrained in the necessary skills and direct observation should be increased to 50% of all sessions until the SLP Paraprofessional performance is judged to be satisfactory over two consecutive observations.

Minimum Supervision Requirements

After the initial 90-day work period, the amount of supervision may be adjusted depending on the assigned tasks. The supervision of each SLP Paraprofessional should include at least 10% direct supervision and 10% indirect supervision on a regularly scheduled basis. For a 40-hour workweek, a total of 8 hours of supervision should be provided for each SLP Paraprofessional with a minimum of 4 hours of direct supervision. Supervision days and time of day (morning/afternoon) should be alternated to ensure that all students receive direct contact with the supervising SLP at least once every 2 weeks.

The supervising speech-language pathologist should be available for consultation via personal contact, pager, phone, or other immediate means 100% of the time, although not necessarily onsite. If for any reason the supervising speech-language pathologist is no longer available to provide the level of supervision stipulated, the SLP Paraprofessional should not perform tasks until a new supervisor has been designated. In the planning process, provision must be made for emergency situations such as an extended illness of the supervising speech-language pathologist.