services provided. If speech-language pathology assistants are used appropriately, and if they are adequately supervised, ASHA certified speech-language pathology assistants' caseloads may decrease to permit sufficient time to supervise staff working under their direction; however, workload may increase as the speech-language pathologist assumes responsibility for training and supervising assistants. Some speech-language pathology assistants do not carry their own caseloads. Assistants help to provide services as directed for the caseloads of speech-language pathologists.

C. Supervising Speech-Language Pathology Assistants
1. Who can supervise speech-language pathology assistants?
ASHA's guidelines define a supervisor as a speech-language pathologist certified by ASHA and licensed by the state (where applicable) who has been practicing for at least 2 years following ASHA certification and has completed at least one preservice course or continuing education unit in supervision.

2. Is the speech-language pathologist supervising an SLPA required to have a course in supervision?
It is recommended, according to ASHA's 1995 guidelines (see above).

3. What resources on supervision does ASHA have available?
Refer to the Knowledge and Skills for Supervisors of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (PDF format), which is also available through the ASHA Action Center at 1-800-498-2071. Additional resource items are available online at the ASHA Shop or by calling 888-498-6699, including "Practical Tools and Forms for Supervising Speech-Language Pathology Assistants" and "Working with SLP Assistants in School Settings." Finally, professional development opportunities in supervision are periodically offered as education programs through ASHA teleseminars and conferences listed on our Continuing Education page.

4. If an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist with less than two years' experience joins a program with an experienced speech-language pathology assistant, should the assistant be terminated to meet ASHA's 1995 guidelines?
No. However, there should be documentation of the attempt to hire a qualified speech-language pathologist as supervisor (i.e., with more than two years' experience ASHA certification). In addition, an alternate plan of supervision should be developed.

5. 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 patients/clients served, the service setting, the tasks assigned, and other factors. ASHA's Code of Ethics (PDF format) requires certificate holders to provide "appropriate supervision." In ASHA's speech-language pathology assistant guidelines, the minimum amount of supervision suggested 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-observation and guidance by a speech-language pathologist while an assigned activity is performed by support personnel. The guidelines also recommend that a speech-language pathologist supervise no more than three language pathology assistants.

State laws vary and may differ from ASHA guidelines. Check specific state regulations to determine amount of supervision required and qualifications for supervisors of assistants in a particular state.

D. Credentialing Speech-Language Pathology Assistants
1. Does ASHA credential speech-language pathology assistants?
Not at this time. ASHA had started a voluntary registration program for speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) in 2003, of which one criterion for such registration required an associate degree in SLP from a technical training program for speech-language pathology assistants. At its Spring 2003 meeting, ASHA's Legislative Council passed a resolution to discontinue the registration program for speech-language pathology assistants and the approval process for SLPAs technical training programs as of December 31, 2003, due to financial reasons.

ASHA no longer has a recognition process for associate degree technical training programs for SLPAs nor a registration process for SLPAs. ASHA will continue to disseminate the Guidelines for Training, Use, and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (PDF format), which were revised in 2004. The revised Guidelines include recommended curriculum for training programs and a checklist for supervisors of SLPAs that can assist in the verification of technical proficiency of the assistant.

2. How does one become a speech-language pathology assistant?
ASHA recommends completion of an associate's degree from a technical training program with a program of study designed to prepare the student to be a speech-language pathology assistant. Because the requirements for speech-language pathology assistant support personnel vary across the country, persons interested in serving as speech-language pathology assistants should check with the state of intended employment for that state's specific requirements. State agencies (licensure boards) currently regulating support personnel have training requirements that range from a high school diploma to a baccalaureate degree plus graduate credit hours, as well as a variety of differing requirements for those supervising these individuals. In addition to state regulatory agencies, state education agencies may credential support personnel to work solely in schools to support service delivery provided by a qualified speech-language pathologist.

ASHA's Guidelines for Training, Use, and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (PDF format) are national in scope and can serve to promote greater uniformity in the terms used to identify speech-language pathology support personnel, training and educational requirements, and job responsibilities.

3. Is continuing education required for a speech-language pathology assistant?
Currently, ASHA does not have a continuing education requirement for speech-language pathology assistants. State laws may vary from ASHA's requirements, so check with the state of intended employment, as several states do require annual continuing education for assistants.

4. Is the use of speech-language pathology assistants permitted in every state?
No. Some states that regulate speech-language pathology do not permit the use of speech-language pathology support personnel. In addition, state departments of education may credential speech-language pathology support personnel. Some school districts hire assistants under the classification of teacher assistants. If a state regulates speech-language pathology support personnel (i.e., under the term of assistant, aide, paraprofessional, apprentice, etc.), then individuals who wish to become employed in that state must meet the state requirements for practice under a licensed and ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist. Call the state licensure board or department of education for specific state regulations. Addresses and phone numbers can be obtained through the ASHA State-by-State page.

E. Training Speech-Language Pathology Assistants
1. Is this a career ladder?
It could be, but it is not specifically intended as such because the associated coursework and fieldwork experiences required in the speech-language pathology assistant program typically differ from those at the bachelor's, pre-professional, or master's professional levels. Anyone interested in pursuing academic coursework and fieldwork as an assistant prior to entering the field of speech-language pathology may want to check with bachelor's degree programs and master's degree programs in speech-language pathology to determine if any courses taken in the associate degree SLPA program will be credited for future studies.

2. What information is available to help a training institution start a speech-language pathology assistant training program?
The 2004 revised Guidelines for Training, Use, and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants include curriculum content for training of SLPAs. (See Section G below for more information.)

3. Can an institution establish a speech-language pathology assistant training program in a state that prohibits the use of speech-language pathology assistants?

Such decisions are under the purview of state agencies that have degree-granting authority and that regulate the professions. Consult with the appropriate state entity that performs such oversight to determine if starting such a program is permissible under postsecondary regulations in place and whether the program would be at variance with state law and regulations for the profession.

4. How can I find qualified speech-language pathology assistants?
Call states that regulate them. Addresses and phone numbers of state licensure boards and regulatory agencies can be obtained from the ASHA State-by-State page. Another option is to call associate degree programs and institutions that train and graduate speech-language pathology assistants. For a list of self-identified training programs for SLPAs, contact actioncenter@asha.org.

5. How many training programs are there for speech-language pathology assistants?
As of September 2003, ASHA is aware of 27 operational associate degree programs for speech-language pathology assistants and 73 institutions that are considering or developing programs. Some of these programs are exploring training opportunities through distance learning and collaborations between community colleges and institutions of higher education. For a self-identified list of SLPA training programs, contact actioncenter@asha.org.

F. Reimbursement Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Services
1. Can speech-language pathologists receive reimbursement for speech-language pathology assistant services?
Medicare policy currently does not recognize speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs), regardless of the level of supervision and does not reimburse for SLP services. Private insurers may cover licensed or registered SLPAs. One must query each payer to verify coverage. Private insurers may or may not provide a different rate of reimbursement for services provided by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) as opposed to an SLP.

Medicaid reimbursement of SLPAs varies from state to state. It is suggested that you contact your National Association of State Medicaid Directors at http://www.nasmd.org/members.htm to determine coverage in your state.

G. Fieldwork for Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Student Trainees
Introduction
The questions and answers below are provided to assist associate degree technical training programs for speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) in establishing fieldwork arrangements that provide SLPAs students with the technical skills for
supervisors to verify their technical proficiency. This section is applicable to SLPA student trainees, not necessarily assistants in the employment setting.

1. Should the fieldwork hours completed by SLPA students be performed at specific types of settings or distributed across specific age groups or disorders?

ASHA does not specify types of settings for fieldwork or distribution of hours, but recommends that the fieldwork provides SLPA students with a variety of experiences with individuals with communication disorders. The intent is for training programs to have flexibility in arranging their fieldwork, and to provide SLPA students with experience with both children and adults in more than one setting; however, ASHA policies do not suggest a specific distribution.

2. Does the minimum of 100 clock hours of fieldwork include observation hours?

No. ASHA guidelines recommend a minimum of 100 clock hours of fieldwork that includes direct and indirect client contact activities covering all of the job responsibilities of an SLPA, but no observation hours. ASHA recommends that observation hours be undertaken before starting the 100 fieldwork hours. It is up to the training program to set the appropriate number of observation hours.

3. When SLPA students are engaged in patient/client contact, does ASHA recommend that they receive direct supervision or indirect supervision for the specified minimum of 50% of the time?

When engaged in patient/client contact, ASHA guidelines recommend that the SLPA student be supervised a minimum of 50% of the time. The patient/client contact refers to direct supervision of the SLPA student, which is defined as on-site, in-view observation and guidance.

4. When SLPA students are placed in fieldwork settings, can they be supervised by more than one SLP?

Yes. ASHA recommends that each SLP supervising the student complete a technical proficiency or skills competency checklist (or whatever specific format your institution uses for fieldwork assessments) for that particular student.

5. Should the supervisor of an SLPA student in an external fieldwork placement hold a current Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP) from ASHA, or can he/she hold state licensure only?

ASHA suggests that an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist supervise the first 100 clock hours of fieldwork defined in ASHA guidelines for each SLPA student. Any fieldwork hours completed that are above 100 clock hours may be under the supervision of a qualified speech-language pathologist who is either state-licensed or ASHA-certified.

6. How many years’ experience does the supervisor need to have to supervise an SLPA student?

The Guidelines for the Training, Use, and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants specify that "the SLPA must be supervised by an SLP who has practiced speech language pathology for at least 2 years following ASHA certification."

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