

Speech-Language Pathologist Assistant (SLPA)

Colorado Educator Licensing Act of 1991; 1 CCR §§ 301-37, 2260.5 – R –11.08

Who are Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPAs)?

The School Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) serves as a member of an educational team, and is authorized to perform tasks prescribed, directed, and supervised by a certified Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP), in implementing services for children/students with speech, language, cognitive, voice, oral-muscular, augmentative/alternative communication disorders, and hearing impairments. (1CCR 301-37, 4.11)

What may speech-language pathology assistants do?

All activities performed by the SLPA are under the supervision and direction of a certified SLP. The following tasks may be conducted by the SLPA (under the direction and supervision of the SLP):

- Follow through with interventions based on the IEP that were developed by the SLP and the IEP team.
- Implement lesson plans and activities designed by the SLP and based on IEP goals and objectives.
- Provide interventions through a variety of service delivery models developed by the SLP and the IEP team such as integrative, in-class therapy, or pull-out.
- Assist the SLP in making instructional materials.
- Collect data as designed by the SLP and report this information to the SLP for interpretation (e.g., tally data for the SLP to use in preparing charts, records, or graphs).
- Assist with clerical duties and departmental operations, such as preparing materials and scheduling activities as directed by the SLP
- Perform checks and maintenance of equipment after being trained by the SLP.
- Support the SLP in research projects, in-service trainings, and public relations programs.
- Perform school-wide speech-language, preschool, kindergarten, and hearing screenings without interpretation.
- Attend parent or IEP meetings as an observer.
- Attend professional development for renewal of authorization status.

What is outside of the speech-language pathology assistant's scope of responsibilities?

An SLPA **may not** perform the following tasks:

- Administer diagnostic tests, conduct evaluations or interpret test results
- Screen or diagnose students for feeding/swallowing disorders
- Provide counseling for students, parents, or families
- Participate in parent conferences or team meetings in the role of a certified SLP
- Write, develop or modify a student's individualized education program (IEP) or formal Progress Reports specific to the IEP
- Create lesson plans
- Interpret data
- Make judgments about a student's services and/or progress
- Sign any formal documents
- Select or dismiss students for/from speech-language services
- Refer or make recommendations for changes in service provision
- Disclose clinical or confidential information to anyone other than the supervising SLP, including the student's teachers, other service providers or family members
- Represent himself or herself as a speech-language pathologist



How may supervision occur and how much supervision is recommended?

Direct supervision may be conducted electronically via a live internet broadcast of video conference by a nationally-certified SLP residing and working within the state of Colorado or within a reasonable commuting distance to Colorado. SLPA students or SLPAs under an **Emergency Authorization** require fifty percent direct supervision.

It is recommended that Authorized SLPAs receive the following amount of supervision: first 90 days – 30% total supervision with 20% being direct supervision and 10% being indirect supervision. After 90 days 20% total supervision with 10% being direct supervision and 10% being indirect supervision.

The recommended number of SLPAs being supervised by one SLP should not exceed three.

Who is responsible for services provided by a speech-language pathology assistant?

The certified supervising speech-language pathologist is responsible for services provided by assistants. For the purposes of Medicaid billing, check with your district's Medicaid consultant.

What credentials are available for SLPAs from the Colorado Department of Education?

A school SLPA shall hold a bachelor's degree in speech communication, speech-language pathology or communication disorders, speech sciences, or a Bachelor's degree in any other field with 24 credits in speech language hearing sciences, from an accepted institution of higher education with approval by an official transcript review by the Department.

AND

The school SLPA shall have successfully completed a school speech-language pathology assistant program or equivalent that meets or exceeds recommended guidelines established by a national association of speech-language-hearing professionals.

AND

A school SLPA shall have successfully completed a minimum of 100 clock--hours of a school-based practicum, under the supervision of an nationally-certified SLP.

When does an SLPA need to renew his or her authorization? What requirements are there for renewal?

A school speech-language pathology assistant authorization is valid for five years. The department of education may renew the authorization for succeeding five-year periods upon presentation of documented evidence of completion of content-related renewal requirements which includes 50 contact hours of continuing education.

According to the Colorado Educator Licensing Act, what knowledge is required to serve as a school speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA), for ages birth to 21?

The school speech-language pathology assistant is knowledgeable about communication processes and basic human communication, and is able to articulate:

- (a) the anatomical/physiological, psychological, developmental, linguistic, and cultural bases of communication processes.
- (b) communication disorders, including articulation, fluency, voice and resonance, receptive and expressive language, and language-based learning disabilities.
- (c) hearing disorders and their impact on speech and language.
- (d) cognitive and social aspects of communication disorders.
- (e) communication modalities, including oral, written, manual, augmentative, and alternative communication techniques and assistive technologies.
- (f) normal development of reading and writing in the context of the general education curriculum.
- (g) characteristics of exceptional students including categorical disabilities, learning differences and developmental deficits.

The SLPA is knowledgeable about service delivery, and is able to

- (a) use appropriate verbal and written language in interactions with children/students, teachers and related professionals.



- (b) follow oral and written directions, including those in intervention plans, and:
 - (i) assist in the selection, preparation, and presentation of instructional and other related materials.
 - (ii) maintain documentation, accurately and concisely, and in a timely manner.
 - (iii) implement documented intervention plans, as developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist.
 - (iv) assist with clerical duties, as assigned by the supervising speech-language pathologist, including, but not limited to scheduling, safety/maintenance of supplies and equipment, and record keeping.
 - (v) collect data for quality improvement, including child/student performance data in classrooms or individual therapy settings.
 - (vi) record children/students status, with regard to established objectives, as stated in the intervention plans, and report information to the supervising speech-language pathologist.
- (c) use constructive feedback from the supervising speech-language pathologist to adapt or modify interaction and/or intervention with children/students.
- (d) provide consistent, discriminating, and meaningful feedback and reinforcement to the children/students.
- (e) implement designated intervention goals/objectives, in specified sequence.

The SLPA is knowledgeable about screening and assessment, though s/he may not perform standardized or non-standardized diagnostic tests, including, but not limited to: feeding evaluations, or interpret test results or counsel parents; and is able to:

- (a) assist the speech-language pathologist with speech-language and hearing screenings or assessments, without interpretation, and report results directly to the supervising speech-language pathologist.
- (b) assist with informal documentation, as directed by the speech-language pathologist.
- (c) provide descriptive behavioral observations that contribute to screening/assessment results, directly to the supervising speech-language pathologist.
- (d) support the speech-language pathologist in research projects, in-service training, and public relations programs, including child find activities.

The SLPA is knowledgeable about ethical practice, and maintaining appropriate relationships with children/students, families, teachers and related service professionals, and is able to:

- (a) demonstrate respect for, and maintain the confidentiality of, information pertaining to students and their families.
- (b) behave in accordance with educational facility guidelines.
- (c) articulate an awareness of student needs and respect for cultural values.
- (d) direct student, family and
- (e) request assistance from the speech language supervisor, as needed.
- (f) manage time effectively and productively.
- (g) recognize own professional limitations, and perform within boundaries of training and job responsibilities.

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

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