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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PROFESSIONAL LICENSING AND  
REGULATION OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS

Introduced By: Representatives Shallcross Smith, Ackerman, Fellela, Perez, Baginski,  
Casimiro, Alzate, and Fogarty

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 5-48.2-6, 5-48.2-8, 5-48.2-9, 5-48.2-10 and 5-48.2-11 of the General  
2 Laws in Chapter 5-48.2 entitled "Professional Licensing and Regulation of Speech-Language  
3 Pathologists and Audiologists" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4           **5-48.2-6. Issuance and renewal of license and fee.**

5           (a) The department shall issue a license as an audiologist or speech-language pathologist,  
6 or renewal thereof, for a period of two (2) years. The license, unless sooner suspended or revoked,  
7 shall expire on the first day of July, two (2) years following its issuance, and may be renewed  
8 biennially (in even years); provided the applicant meets the requirements of this chapter ~~and the~~  
9 ~~statutory provisions of the act. The licensee must maintain their certificate of clinical competence~~  
10 ~~in their practicing area (speech language pathology or audiology) in order to renew their license.~~

11           (b) A license may be renewed by submission of the renewal application and renewal fee as  
12 set forth in the fee structure for licensing, laboratory, and administrative services provided by the  
13 department of health in their regulations payable before July 1 of even years (biennially).

14           (c) A provisional license may be renewed annually from the date of issue, if the  
15 postgraduate professional experience has exceeded one year, by submission of the renewal  
16 application and renewal fee as set forth in the fee structure for licensing, laboratory, and  
17 administrative services provided by the department of health. A provisional license shall not exceed  
18 thirty-six (36) months past the initiation of the professional experience and will expire ninety (90)

1 days after the end of the postgraduate professional experience.

2 (d)(1) Any licensee who allows their license to lapse by failing to renew it on or before the  
3 thirtieth day of June of even years (biennially), may have the license renewed by submitting to the  
4 department an application and renewal fee plus an additional late fee as set forth in the fee structure  
5 for licensing, laboratory, and administrative services provided by the department of health.

6 (2) Any person who allows their license to lapse longer than two (2) consecutive licensing  
7 periods may be reinstated by the department, upon the filing of:

8 (i) A reinstatement application for licensure;

9 (ii) Payment of the current licensure renewal fee plus an additional late fee as set forth in  
10 the fee structure for licensing, laboratory, and administrative services provided by the department  
11 of health; and

12 (iii) Documentation of completion of continuing education units (CEUs) as required in this  
13 chapter taken during the previous two (2) years.

14 (e) **Inactive status.**

15 (1) An individual licensed as a speech-language pathologist and/or audiologist in Rhode  
16 Island, not in the active practice of speech-language pathology or audiology within Rhode Island  
17 during any year, may upon request to the department have their name transferred to an inactive  
18 status and shall not be required to register biennially or pay any fee as long as the individual remains  
19 inactive.

20 (2) Inactive status may be maintained for no longer than two (2) consecutive licensing  
21 periods, after which period licensure will be terminated and a reinstatement application submitted  
22 to the department will be required to resume practice.

23 (3) Any individual whose name has been transferred to an inactive status may be restored  
24 to active status within two (2) licensing periods to practice speech-language pathology or audiology  
25 without a penalty fee, upon the filing of:

26 (i) An application for licensure renewal with a licensure renewal fee as set forth in the fee  
27 structure for licensing, laboratory, and administrative services provided by the department of  
28 health; and

29 (ii) Such other information as may be requested by the board.

30 **5-48.2-8. Support personnel.**

31 (a) A speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) for speech-language pathologists shall  
32 meet the following requirements:

33 (1) ~~Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and have successfully~~  
34 ~~completed no less than eighteen (18) hours of graduate credit in the areas of speech language~~

1 ~~pathology to include the following:~~

2 ~~(i) Normal processes in speech, language, and hearing three (3) hours;~~

3 ~~(ii) Disorders of speech, language, and hearing nine (9) hours;~~

4 ~~(iii) Equipment, materials, procedures, and data collection used in assessment and/or~~  
5 ~~management of speech, language, and hearing disorders six (6) hours; and~~

6 ~~(iv) Completion of twenty five percent (25%) of those practicum hours required for~~  
7 ~~professional personnel by the American Speech Language Hearing Association.~~

8 Possess at minimum a:

9 (i) Two (2) year speech-language pathology assistant program degree from an accredited  
10 institution; or

11 (ii) Bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders from an accredited  
12 institution; or

13 (iii) Bachelor's degree and a certificate from a board approved speech-language pathology  
14 assistant program; or

15 (iv) Associate's, bachelor's, or advanced degree from an accredited institution in a related  
16 field to include, but not limited to, human development and family sciences, education, or  
17 psychology and complete at least eighteen (18) credit hours in coursework in speech-language  
18 pathology in the following areas: introductory or overview course in communication disorders,  
19 phonetics, anatomy and physiology of speech and hearing mechanisms, language development,  
20 speech and language disorders, and clinical methods in speech language pathology.

21 (2) Complete twenty (20) hours of observation of clinical practice with a licensed speech  
22 language pathologist.

23 (b) Scope of practice of speech-language pathology assistants. A licensed speech-language  
24 pathology assistant shall only engage in those duties that adhere to the code of ethics of the board  
25 and are planned, designed, and supervised by a licensed speech-language pathologist, including:

26 (1) Assisting with speech, language, and hearing screenings without clinical interpretation  
27 of results;

28 (2) Administering and scoring screenings for clinical interpretation by the supervising  
29 speech-language pathologist;

30 (3) Assisting with, but not administering or interpreting the results of, client assessments,  
31 including setting up the testing environment, gathering and preparing materials, and taking notes;

32 (4) Administering and scoring assessments and progress monitoring tools without clinical  
33 interpretation of results, if the licensed speech-language pathology assistant meets the examiner  
34 requirements for such tools and the supervising speech-language pathologist has verified that such

1 examiner requirements have been met;

2 (5) Performing routine activities for therapy sessions in accordance with a plan developed  
3 and directed by the speech-language pathologist who retains the professional responsibility for such  
4 client, including:

5 (i) Implementing documented care plans or protocols;  
6 (ii) Providing direct therapy services to address treatment goals;  
7 (iii) Adjusting and documenting the amount and type of support or scaffolding provided to  
8 the client in treatment to facilitate progress; and  
9 (iv) Developing and implementing activities and materials for teaching and practice of  
10 skills to address the goals of the client;

11 (6) Providing treatment through a variety of service delivery models as directed by the  
12 supervising speech-language pathologist;

13 (7) Utilizing telecommunications technology to provide services remotely to clients as  
14 directed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;

15 (8) Documenting client performance and reporting such performance information to the  
16 supervising speech-language pathologist;

17 (9) Providing caregiver coaching, including modeling and teaching communication  
18 strategies and providing feedback regarding caregiver-client interactions for facilitation and  
19 carryover of skills;

20 (10) Sharing objective information regarding client performance without interpretation or  
21 recommendations as directed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;

22 (11) Assisting with programming augmentative and alternative communication devices  
23 and assisting and training clients with using such devices;

24 (12) Demonstrating strategies and assisting clients with skills included in the feeding and  
25 swallowing plan developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;

26 (13) Signing or initialing informal treatment notes and, upon request, co-signing formal  
27 documents with the supervising speech-language pathologist;

28 (14) Assisting with clerical duties and site operations, including preparing materials,  
29 scheduling appointments and activities, preparing charts, records, or graphs, and performing checks  
30 and maintenance of equipment;

31 (15) Assisting clients with transitioning to and from therapy sessions; and  
32 (16) Performing duties not otherwise restricted to the practice of speech-language  
33 pathology.

34 (c) A speech-language pathologist assistant shall not engage in the practice of speech-

1 language pathology, including the following:

2 (1) Representing themselves as a speech-language pathologist;

3 (2) Performing diagnostic tests or evaluations;

4 (3) Performing procedures that require a professional level of clinical judgment and  
5 technical skill;

6 (4) Interpreting results and observations of feeding and swallowing evaluations or  
7 screenings performed by a speech-language pathologist;

8 (5) Participating in formal conferences or meetings without the presence of the supervising  
9 speech-language pathologist;

10 (6) Providing interpretative information to a client, the family of a client, or any other  
11 individual;

12 (7) Writing, developing, or modifying a client's treatment plan;

13 (8) Assisting in or providing services described in subsection (a) of this section unless  
14 directed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;

15 (9) Signing any formal documents in place of the supervising speech-language pathologist;

16 (10) Selecting a client for service or discharging a client from service;

17 (11) Making a decision regarding the need for additional services or making a referral for  
18 service;

19 (12) Disclosing clinical or confidential information either orally or in writing to anyone  
20 other than the supervising speech-language pathologist, unless mandated by law or authorized by  
21 the supervising speech-language pathologist; or

22 (13) Developing or determining the swallowing or feeding strategies or precautions for a  
23 client or providing feeding or swallowing treatment.

24 ~~(d)~~ (d) A speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) shall be registered at the department  
25 and be required to re-register every two (2) years.

26 ~~(b)~~ (e) Support personnel for audiologists (audiometric aide) or audiology assistants must  
27 meet the following requirements:

28 (1) Hold a high school diploma;

29 (2) Receive intensive on-the-job training in accordance with the American Speech-  
30 Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) or American Academy of Audiology (AAA) guidelines  
31 for support personnel by the supervising licensed audiologist prior to providing services. Any  
32 subsequent supervising licensed audiologist may require retraining of an audiometric aide or  
33 audiology assistant under the supervising licensed audiologist's supervision.

34 (3) Audiometric aides or audiology assistants shall be registered at the department and be

1 required to re-register every two (2) years.

2 **5-48.2-9. Supervision and responsibility.**

3 (a)(1) A supervising professional must be a speech-language pathologist or audiologist who  
4 is licensed under ~~the act and~~ this chapter; ~~has attained and maintained their certificate of clinical~~  
5 ~~competency~~ and who has been actively working in the field for twenty-four (24) months after  
6 completion of the postgraduate professional experience; and must be responsible for the acts and  
7 performances, patient screening, and specific tasks assigned by the licensee to the speech-language  
8 pathology assistant (SLPA)/audiometric aide or audiology assistant.

9 (2) A licensee who supervises support personnel must:

10 (i) Utilize the services of only those who meet the minimum requirements enumerated  
11 under this chapter;

12 (ii) Ensure that the support personnel are assigned only those duties and responsibilities for  
13 which the person has been specifically trained and which the assistant is qualified to perform;

14 (iii) Ensure that persons who will be receiving services from support personnel, or the  
15 person's legal representative, are informed that services are being rendered by support personnel;

16 (iv) Provide supervision of the support personnel (other than newborn hearing screeners  
17 and school hearing screeners); and

18 (v) Complete a minimum of two (2) hours of professional development in clinical  
19 instruction/supervision.

20 (b) A speech-language pathologist supervisor may only supervise one full-time equivalent  
21 speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) support personnel and not more than two (2) SLPAs  
22 at any time and an audiologist supervisor may only supervise three (3) full-time equivalent  
23 audiometric aides or audiology assistants unless otherwise approved by the board. At no time  
24 should support personnel perform tasks when a supervising SLPA cannot be reached by personal  
25 contact, phone, pager, or other immediate means. When multiple supervisors are used, the  
26 supervisors are encouraged to coordinate and communicate with each other.

27 (c) Observations of support audiometric aides must be completed and documented as to  
28 date, amount of time, and accuracy and efficacy of service according to the following: Direct on-  
29 site observations of the first ten (10) hours of direct client contact; and five percent (5%) of all  
30 clinical sessions after the first ten (10) hours for every forty (40) consecutive hours worked; and  
31 indirect supervision (e.g., home, interactive television, audio/video review, or patient record  
32 review) of five percent (5%) of each forty (40) consecutive hours worked.

33 (d) Observations of a speech-language pathology assistant (SLPA) pathology support  
34 personnel shall be completed and documented as to date, amount of time, and accuracy and efficacy

1 of service according to the following:

2 (1) Direct supervision means in-view observation and guidance while the SLPA is  
3 performing a clinical activity. Direct supervision does not include reviewing an audio or video  
4 recorded session later.

5 (2) A minimum of twenty percent (20%) direct supervision and ten percent (10%) indirect  
6 supervision is required of all the time that assistant is providing services during the first ninety (90)  
7 days of employment. After the first ninety (90) days, the supervising SLPA may adjust their amount  
8 of supervision if they determine that the SLPA meets appropriate competencies. A minimum of ten  
9 percent (10%) direct and ten percent (10%) indirect supervision is required every one hundred  
10 eighty (180) days regardless of employment status.

11 (e) Supervisors shall maintain records which document the frequency and type of  
12 supervision of support personnel, such records to be available for audit upon request by the board.

13 **5-48.2-10. Supervision of support personnel — Newborn hearing screeners and school**  
14 **hearing screeners.**

15 (a) Hospital-based newborn hearing screeners and school-based hearing screeners shall be  
16 trained by a licensed audiologist working in the newborn hearing or school screening program  
17 according to training guidelines established by the programs.

18 (b) Supervision shall include a method of evaluation and documenting the competency of  
19 each screener upon completion of the initial training and at least annually thereafter by a licensed  
20 audiologist working in the newborn hearing or school screening program.

21 ~~(c) Observations of a speech language pathology assistant (SLPA) pathology support~~  
22 ~~personnel must be completed and documented as to date, amount of time, and accuracy and efficacy~~  
23 ~~of service according to the following:~~

24 ~~(1) Direct on-site observations of the first ten (10) hours of direct client contact; and ten~~  
25 ~~percent (10%) of clinical sessions after the first ten (10) hours of each forty (40) consecutive hours~~  
26 ~~worked; and~~

27 ~~(2) Indirect supervision (e.g., phone, interactive television, audio/video review) of ten~~  
28 ~~percent (10%) of each forty (40) consecutive hours worked.~~

29 (d) Supervisors shall ~~must observe all provisions of the ASHA policy regarding support~~  
30 ~~personnel unless a specific policy is addressed in this chapter, including, but not limited to, that the~~  
31 ~~licensee must~~ maintain records that document the frequency and type of supervision of support  
32 personnel, such records to be available for audit upon request by the board.

33 **5-48.2-11. Continuing education requirements.**

34 (a) On or before the thirtieth day of June of even years, every person licensed to practice

1 speech-language pathology and/or audiology within Rhode Island shall complete not less than  
2 twenty (20) clock hours of continuing education within the preceding two (2) years and be able to  
3 present satisfactory evidence of completion to the department.

4 (1) Course descriptions, proof of attendance, or other documentation of completion shall  
5 be retained by the licensee for a minimum of four (4) years and is subject to random audit by the  
6 department.

7 (2) Activities approved by the board for continuing education credit are those sponsored  
8 by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the American Academy of  
9 Audiology (AAA), a state department of education, other International Association for Continuing  
10 Education and Training (IACET)-authorized providers, and/or continuing medical education units  
11 (CMEs) from the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). Approved  
12 activities may include conferences, seminars, self-study programs, courses, or workshops  
13 sponsored by the organizations noted above, or course work from an accredited institution.

14 (b) Those persons holding licensure in both speech-language pathology and audiology must  
15 have completed and have evidence of completion of not less than thirty (30) clock hours of  
16 continuing education within the preceding two (2) years.

17 (c) Continuing education hours may not be carried over from one renewal period to the  
18 next.

19 ~~(d)(1) Continuing education hours must be in accordance with the American Speech-~~  
20 ~~Language Hearing Association's requirements including at least two (2) hours in cultural~~  
21 ~~competency, cultural humility, culturally responsive practice or diversity, equity, and inclusion~~  
22 ~~(DEI) and at least one hour in the area of ethics.~~

23 ~~(2)~~ If the licensee is acting as a clinical supervisor, a minimum of two (2) hours of  
24 professional development in clinical instruction/supervision is required.

25 (e) Speech-language pathologists or audiologists initially licensed by examination after the  
26 July 1 renewal date shall be exempt from the continuing education requirements stated in this  
27 section until the date of the next renewal cycle (i.e., June 30 of the second year following its  
28 issuance).

29 (f) The board, at its discretion, may extend, reduce, or waive for a person the requirement  
30 for continuing education for hardship or other extenuating circumstances as the board deems  
31 appropriate.

32 (g) The board shall promulgate regulations requiring continuing education for any speech-  
33 language pathology assistant license renewal or reinstatement. The board may grant exceptions or  
34 exemptions from these continuing education requirements.



1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PROFESSIONAL LICENSING AND  
REGULATION OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS

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- 1           This act would establish prevailing standards and procedures for licensing speech-language
- 2 pathologists and audiologists in Rhode Island.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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