

RULES AND REGULATIONS
FOR LICENSING
SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS
AND AUDIOLOGISTS
(R5-48-SPA)

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Department of Health
June 1982

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the provisions of section 42-35-4.1 of the
Rhode Island General Laws, as amended)**

INTRODUCTION

These rules and regulations are promulgated pursuant to the authority conferred under section 5-48-6 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended, and are established for the purpose of establishing minimum standards and procedures for licensing speech pathologists and audiologists in this state.

Pursuant to the provisions of section 42-35-3(c) of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended, the following issues were given consideration in arriving at the regulations: (1) alternative approaches to the regulations; (2) duplication or overlap with other state regulations; (3) significant economic impact on small business as defined in Chapter 42-35. No duplication, overlap, alternative approach or significant economic impact was identified and the regulations are adopted in the best interest of the public.

These regulations shall supersede any previous *Rules and Regulations for Licensing Speech Pathologists and Audiologists (R5-48-SPA)* promulgated by the Department of Health and filed with the Secretary of State.

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Section 1.0 *Definitions*

Wherever used in these rules and regulations, the following terms shall be construed as follows:

- 1.1 ***"Accredited/approved"*** means that an institution/program holds regional accreditation from one (1) of six (6) regional accrediting bodies: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- 1.2 ***"Act"*** shall refer to Chapter 5-48 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended, entitled, "Speech Pathology and Audiology."
- 1.3 ***"Audiologist"*** means an individual who is licensed by the Board to practice audiology.
- 1.4 ***"Audiology"*** means the application of principles, methods, and procedures related to hearing and the disorders of the hearing and balance systems, to related language and speech disorders, and to aberrant behavior related to hearing loss. A hearing disorder is defined as altered sensitivity, acuity, function, processing, and/or damage to the integrity of the physiological auditory/vestibular systems, in individuals or groups of individuals who have or are suspected of having such disorders.
- 1.5 ***"Audiology support personnel"*** shall operate under the title "audiometric aide" and means an individual who meets minimum qualifications, established by the Board, which are less than those established by the Act as necessary for licensing as an audiologist; does not act independently; is limited to hearing screening with pass/fail criteria, and works under the direction and supervision of an audiologist licensed under the Act who has been actively working in the field for twenty-four (24) months after completion of the postgraduate professional experience and who accepts the responsibility for the acts and performances of the audiometric aide while working under the Act. The audiology support personnel shall be registered with the Board within thirty (30) days of beginning work or the supervising audiologist will be assessed a late filing fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00).
- 1.6 ***"Board"*** shall mean the "State Board of Examiners for Speech Pathology and Audiology."
- 1.7 ***"Clinical fellowship or traineeship"*** shall mean the direct clinical work, consultation or other duties relevant to clinical work with individuals presenting disorders in communication, for a cumulative or equivalent total of nine (9) months of full-time employment following completion of professional education under supervision pursuant to section 5-48-7 of the Act and in accordance with the provisions of sections 6.6--6.9 herein.
- 1.8 ***"Clinical fellow"*** means the person who is practicing speech language pathology or audiology under the supervision of a licensed speech language pathologist or audiologist while completing the postgraduate professional experience as required by the Act and who holds a current provisional license in accordance with the requirements described herein.
- 1.9 ***"Department"*** means the Rhode Island Department of Health.

- 1.10 **"Director"** shall mean the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health.
- 1.11 **"Graduate program"** means a post-baccalaureate accredited program leading to a master's or doctoral degree, including a professional doctoral degree, whether offered through an accredited graduate or professional school.
- 1.12 **"Person"** means an individual, partnership, organization or corporation, except that only individuals can be licensed under the Act.
- 1.13 **"The practice of audiology"** means rendering or offering to render any service in audiology, including prevention, screening and identification, evaluation, habilitation, rehabilitation; participating in environmental and occupational hearing conservation programs, and habilitation and rehabilitation programs including hearing aid and assistive listening device evaluation, prescription, preparation, dispensing, and/or selling and orientation; auditory training and speech reading; conducting and interpreting tests of vestibular function and nystagmus; conducting and interpreting electrophysiological measures of the auditory pathway; cerumen management; evaluating sound environment and equipment; calibrating instruments used in testing and supplementing auditory function; and planning, directing, conducting or supervising programs that render or offer to render any service in audiology.

The practice of audiology may include speech and/or language screening to a pass/fail determination, for the purpose of initial identification of individuals with other disorders of communication.

A practice is deemed to be the "practice of audiology" if services are offered under any title incorporating such word as "audiology", "audiologist", "audiometry" "audiometrist", "audiological", "audiometrics", "hearing therapy", "hearing therapist", "hearing clinic", "hearing clinician", "hearing conservation", "hearing conservationist", "hearing center", hearing aid audiologist", or any similar title or description of services.

- 1.14 **"The practice of speech language pathology"** means rendering or offering to render any service in speech language pathology including prevention, identification, evaluation, consultation, habilitation, rehabilitation; determining the need for augmentative communication systems, dispensing and selling such systems, and providing training in the use of such systems; and planning, directing, conducting, or supervising programs designed to prevent, identify, evaluate, treat or ameliorate disorders of human communication in individuals or groups of individuals that render or offer to render any service in speech language pathology.

The practice of speech language pathology may include nondiagnostic pure-tone air conduction screening, screening tympanometry, and acoustic reflex screening, limited to a pass/fail determination, for the purpose of performing a speech and language evaluation or for the initial identification of individuals with other disorders of communication. The practice of speech language pathology also may include aural rehabilitation which is defined as services and procedures for facilitating adequate receptive and expressive communication in individuals with hearing impairment. A practice is deemed to be the "practice of speech language pathology" if services are offered under any title incorporating such words as "speech pathology", "speech pathologist", "speech therapy", "speech therapist", "speech correction", "speech correctionist", "speech clinic", "speech clinician", "language pathology", "language pathologist", "voice therapy", voice therapist", "voice pathology", "voice pathologist", "logopedics", "logopedist", "communicology",

"communicologist", "aphasiology", "aphasiologist", "phoniatrist" or any similar title or description of services.

- 1.15 ***"Speech language pathologist"*** means an individual who is licensed by the Board to practice speech language pathology.
- 1.16 ***"Speech language pathology"*** means the application of principles, methods, and procedures for prevention, identification, evaluation, consultation, habilitation, rehabilitation, instruction, and research related to the development and disorders of human communication. Disorders are defined to include any and all conditions, whether of organic or nonorganic origin, that impede the normal process of human communication in individuals or groups of individuals who have or are suspected of having such conditions, including but not limited to, disorders and related disorders of (1) speech: articulation, fluency, voice, (including respiration, phonation and resonance); (2) language (involving the parameters of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics; and including disorders of receptive and expressive communication in oral, written, graphic, and manual modalities); (3) oral, pharyngeal, laryngeal, cervical esophageal, and related functions (e.g. dysphagia, including disorders of swallowing and oral function for feeding; oro-facial myofunctional disorders); (4) cognitive aspects of communication (including communication disability and other functional disabilities associated with cognitive impairment); and (5) social aspects of communication (including challenging behavior, ineffective social skills, lack of communication opportunities).
- 1.17 ***"Speech language support personnel"*** means an individual who meets minimum qualifications established by the Board, which are less than those established by Chapter 5-48 as necessary for licensing as a speech language pathologist; does not act independently; and works under the direction and supervision of a speech language pathologist licensed under Chapter 5-48 who has been actively working in the field for twenty-four (24) months after completion of the postgraduate professional experience and who accepts the responsibility for the acts and performances of the speech language pathology assistant while working under the Act. The speech language support personnel shall be registered with the Board within thirty (30) days of beginning work or the supervising speech language pathologist will be assessed a late filing fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00).

Section 2.0 ***License Requirements***

- 2.1 No person shall practice or hold himself or herself out in this state as being able to practice speech language pathology or audiology unless licensed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 5-48 of the Act and the rules and regulations herein. The provisions of the Act or these rules and regulations shall not apply to individuals specifically exempt from the provisions thereof by section 5-48-10.
- 2.2 A provisional license for the clinical fellow (defined in section 1.8 herein) shall be required in either speech language pathology or audiology for that period of postgraduate professional experience as required in section 5-48-7 of the Act and section 3.0 herein. A provisional license shall authorize an individual to practice speech-language pathology or audiology solely in connection with the completion of the supervised postgraduate professional experience.

Section 3.0 ***Qualifications for Licensure***

- 3.1 An applicant seeking licensure to practice as a speech language pathologist and/or an audiologist in this state must:
- a) be of good moral character;
 - b) have attained a master's degree or a doctoral degree or equivalent in speech language pathology or audiology, from an accredited institution which degree is in accordance with the current minimum requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence issued by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA);
 - c) complete supervised clinical practicum experiences from a graduate program of an educational institution or its cooperating programs, the content of which shall be approved by the Board and in accordance with the current minimum requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence issued by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association;
 - d) present written evidence from licensed employers or supervisors of a cumulative or equivalent total of nine (9) months of full-time employment as a trainee or fellow in speech language pathology or audiology as authorized pursuant to section 5-48-6 of the Act and following the completion of the aforesaid educational requirements for a master's degree, or during the course of obtaining a doctorate degree; and
 - e) pass a national examination in speech language pathology or audiology as required by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or approved by the Board.

Section 4.0 ***Application for Licensure and Fee***

- 4.1 Application for licensure shall be made on such forms as shall be provided by the Department and shall be accompanied by the following documents, transcripts and fee:
- 4.1.1 *for U.S. citizens:* a certified copy of birth certificate;

for non-U.S. citizens: proof of citizenship or lawful alien status;
 - 4.1.2 a statement from two (2) reputable persons unrelated to the applicant certifying to the good moral character of the applicant;
 - 4.1.3 the application fee of thirty-one dollars and fifty cents (\$31.50) payable to the General Treasurer, state of Rhode Island;
 - 4.1.4 educational transcripts and documentation of:
 - i. completion of educational requirements of section 3.1 herein;
 - ii. completion of the supervised clinical experience of section 3.1 herein;

- iii. completion of clinical fellowship or traineeship of section 3.1 herein; or
- iv. current license from another state which has standards that are at least equal to those of this state, including transcripts and documentation of section 4.1.4 (i), (ii) and (iii) above and/or
- v. documentation of Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech Pathology or Audiology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in the area for which they are applying for license.

Section 5.0 *Licensure for Speech Pathologists and Audiologists*

5.1 *By examination:*

Pursuant to section 5-48-7 (g) of the Act, an applicant shall be required to pass a written examination in speech language pathology or audiology as required by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association.

5.2 *Without examination:*

A license to practice speech pathology or audiology may be issued without written examination pursuant to section 5-48-8 of the Act, if the applicant holds:

- a) a current and valid certificate of clinical competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; *or*
- b) a current license in a state which has standards that are at least equivalent to those of this state.

Section 6.0 *Issuance and Renewal of License and Fee*

- 6.1 The Board shall issue a license or renewal thereof, for a period of two (2) years. Said license, unless sooner suspended or revoked, shall expire by limitation on the first day of July two (2) years following its issuance and may be renewed biennially (in even years), provided the applicant meets the requirements of the rules and regulations herein and the statutory provisions of the Act.
- 6.2 A biennial license renewal fee of sixty-two dollars and fifty cents (\$62.50) payable before July 1 of even years (biennially); or a provisional license renewal fee of thirty-one dollars and fifty cents (\$31.50) payable annually from the date of issue payable to the General Treasurer, state of Rhode Island, shall accompany each application for licensure renewal.
- 6.3 A license shall be issued no less than thirty (30) days after the application thereof and only to a specific licensee and it shall not be transferable.
- 6.4 Any licensee who allows his or her license to lapse may have same reinstated by submitting to the Board an application and accompanying documents and fee as required under sections 4.0 and 6.4(a) herein.

- a) Any person who allows his or her license to lapse by failing to renew it on or before the thirtieth (30th) day of June, of even years (biennially), may be reinstated by the Board on payment of the current renewal fee plus an additional late filing fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00).

Inactive Status

6.5 An individual licensed as a speech language pathologist and/or audiologist in this state, not in the active practice of speech-language pathology or audiology within this state during any year, may upon request to the Board, have his or her name transferred to an inactive status and shall not be required to register biennially or pay any fee as long as he or she remains inactive.

- a) Inactive status may be maintained for no longer than two (2) consecutive licensing periods, after which period licensure will be terminated and reapplication to the Board will be required to resume practice.
- b) Any individual whose name has been transferred to an inactive status may be restored to active status within two (2) licensing periods to practice speech language pathology or audiology without a penalty fee, upon the filing of:
 - (1) an application for licensure renewal with a licensure renewal fee of sixty-two dollars and fifty cents (\$62.50) made payable by check to the General Treasurer, state of Rhode Island; and
 - (2) such other information as may be requested by the Board.

Qualifications for a Provisional License

- 6.6 To be eligible for provisional licensure by the Board, the applicant must submit an application with the required application fee and be in compliance with the requirements of sections 5-48-7 (1), (4), (5) and (7) of the Rhode Island General Laws, as amended, and these rules and regulations herein.
- 6.7 In addition to the requirements of section 6.6 (above), the applicant shall also submit a plan for the content of the supervised postgraduate professional experience on a form approved by the Board and available from the Department.
- 6.8 If the postgraduate professional experience extends beyond one (1) year, provisional licensure must be renewed annually and shall not exceed thirty-six (36) months past the initiation of the professional experience.
- 6.9 The provisional licensure will expire ninety (90) days after the end of the postgraduate professional experience.

Section 7.0 Denial, Suspension and Revocation of License

- 7.1 The Board is authorized to suspend or revoke any license to practice speech language pathology and/or audiology upon finding by the Board that the person is guilty of conduct, found in section 5-48-11 of the General Laws, as follows:

- a) fraudulently or deceptively obtained or attempted to obtain a license for the applicant, licensee, holder, or for another; or
- b) fraudulently or deceptively used a license; or
- c) altered a license; or
- d) aided or abetted unlicensed practice; or
- e) committed fraud and deceit in the practice of speech language pathology or of audiology including but not limited to:
 - 1) using or promoting or causing the use of any misleading, deceiving, or untruthful advertising matter, promotional literature, testimonial, guarantee, warranty, label, brand, insignia, or any other representation;
 - 2) falsely representing the use or availability of services or advice of a physician;
 - 3) misrepresenting the applicant, licensee, or holder by using the word "doctor" or any similar word, abbreviation, or symbol if the use is not accurate or if the degree was not obtained from an accredited institution;
 - 4) willfully making or filing a false report or record in the practice of speech language pathology or audiology;
 - 5) submitting a false statement to collect a fee;
 - 6) obtaining a fee through fraud or misrepresentation; or
- f) Providing services while mentally incompetent; or
- g) Engaging in illegal, incompetent, or habitually negligent practice; or
- h) Providing professional services while:
 - 1) under the influence of alcohol; or
 - 2) using any narcotic or controlled dangerous substance or other drug that is in excess of therapeutic amounts or without valid medical indication; or
- i) Promoting the sale of devices, appliances, or products to a patient who cannot benefit from such devices, appliances or products; or
- j) Violating any provision of the Act, any lawful order given, or rule or regulation adopted by the Board; or

- k) Being convicted of, or pleading guilty or nolo contendere to, a felony or to a crime involving moral turpitude, whether or not any appeal or another proceeding is pending to have the conviction or plea set aside; or
- l) Failing to maintain continuing education requirements; or
- m) Failing to conform to minimum standards of prevailing practice of speech language pathology or audiology.
- n) Being disciplined by a licensing or disciplinary authority of any other state or country or convicted or disciplined by a court of any state or country for an act that would be grounds for disciplinary action under this section.
- o) Incompetent, negligent, or willful misconduct in professional practice which shall include any departure from or the failure to conform to the minimal standards of acceptable and prevailing professional practice in speech language pathology and audiology as shall be determined by the Board. The Board need not establish actual injury to clients in order to adjudge a speech language pathologist or audiologist of the above named conduct.

7.2 The procedure for denial, revocation or suspension shall be as that set forth in section 5-48-13 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended.

Section 8.0 ***Support Personnel***

8.1 On or after July 1, 1994, support personnel for speech language pathologists must meet the following requirements:

- 8.1.1 hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and have successfully completed no less than eighteen (18) hours of graduate credit in the areas of speech language pathology to include the following:
 - i. normal processes in speech, language and hearing (3 hours);
 - ii. disorders of speech, language and hearing (9 hours);
 - iii. equipment, materials, procedures and data collection used in assessment and/or management of speech, language and hearing disorders (6 hours); and
 - iv. completion of twenty-five percent (25%) of those practicum hours required for professional personnel by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA).

8.2 Support personnel for audiologists (audiometric aide) must meet the following requirements:

- 8.2.1 hold a high school diploma;

- 8.2.2 receive intensive on-the-job training in accordance with American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) or American Academy of Audiology (AAA) guidelines for support personnel by the supervising licensed audiologist prior to providing services. (Any subsequent supervising licensed audiologist may require retraining of an audiometric aide under his/her supervision).

8.3 *Supervision and Responsibility:*

A supervising professional must be licensed under the Act and must be responsible for the acts and performances, patient screening, and specific tasks assigned by the licensee to the speech language pathologist/audiometric aide.

8.3.1 A licensee who supervises support personnel must:

- a) utilize the services of only those who meet the minimum requirements enumerated under section 8.0 of these rules and regulations;
- b) ensure that the support personnel are assigned only those duties and responsibilities for which the person has been specifically trained and which the assistant is qualified to perform;
- c) ensure that persons who will be receiving services from support personnel, or the person's legal representative, are informed that services are being rendered by support personnel;
- d) provide supervision of the support personnel:
 - i. a speech/language pathologist supervisor may only supervise one (1) full-time equivalent speech language support personnel and an audiologist supervisor may only supervise three (3) full-time equivalent audiometric aides, unless otherwise approved by the Board;
 - ii. observations of support audiometric aides must be completed and documented as to date, amount of time, and accuracy and efficacy of service according to the following:
 - 1. direct on-site observations of the first ten (10) hours of direct client contact; and five percent (5%) of all clinical sessions after the first ten hours for every forty (40) consecutive hours worked; and
 - 2. indirect supervision (e.g. phone, interactive television, audio/video review or patient record review) of five percent (5%) of each forty (40) consecutive hours worked.

- iii. observations of speech language pathology support personnel must be completed and documented as to date, amount of time, and accuracy and efficacy of service according to the following:
 - 1. direct on-site observations of the first ten (10) hours of direct client contact; and ten percent (10%) of clinical sessions after the first ten (10) hours of each forty (40) consecutive hours worked; and
 - 2. Indirect supervision (e.g. phone, interactive television, audio/video review) of ten percent (10%) of each forty (40) consecutive hours worked.
- e) observe all provisions of the ASHA policy regarding support personnel unless a specific policy is addressed in these regulations, including but not limited to, that the licensee must maintain records which document the frequency and type of supervision of support personnel, such records to be available for audit upon request by the Board.

Registration of Support Personnel

- 8.4 As of the effective date of these regulations, all audiology and speech language support personnel shall be registered with the Board within thirty (30) days of beginning work or the supervising audiologist/speech language pathologist (respectively) will be assessed a late filing fee of fifty (\$50.00). All currently employed audiology and speech language support personnel shall also be registered with the Board within thirty (30) days of the effective date of these regulations.
- 8.5 Application for registration as an audiology or speech language support personnel shall be made on a form provided by the Board, which may be obtained at:

The Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Professional Regulation
Three Capitol Hill, Room 104
Providence, RI 02908
401.222.2827

Section 9.0 *Continuing Education Requirements*

- 9.1 On or before the thirtieth (30th) day of June of even years, every person licensed to practice speech language pathology and/or audiology within this state shall complete not less than twenty (20) clock hours of continuing education within the preceding two (2) years and be able to present satisfactory evidence of completion to the Board.
 - a) Course descriptions, proof of attendance, or other documentation of completion shall be retained by the licensee for a minimum of four (4) years and is subject to random audit by the Board.
 - b) Activities approved by the Board for continuing education credit are those sponsored by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA), the American Academy of Audiology

(AAA), a state department of education, other International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET)-authorized providers, and/or continuing medical education units (CMEs) from the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). Approved activities may include conferences, seminars, self-study programs, or workshops sponsored by the organizations noted above, or course work from an accredited institution.

- 9.2 Those persons holding licensure in both speech language pathology and audiology must have completed and have evidence of completion of not less than thirty (30) clock hours of continuing education within the preceding two (2) years.
- 9.3 Continuing education hours may not be carried over from one (1) renewal period to the next.
- 9.4 The Board, at its discretion, may extend, reduce, or waive for a person the requirement for continuing education for hardship or other extenuating circumstances as the Board deems appropriate.

Section 10.0 ***Rules Governing the Dispensing and/or Selling of Hearing Aids***

- 10.1 An audiologist who engages in the dispensing and/or selling of hearing aids shall comply with any and all federal and state laws and regulations governing the sale of hearing aids.

Section 11.0 ***Rules Governing Practices and Procedures***

- 11.1 All hearings and reviews required under the provisions of Chapter 5-48 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, as amended, shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the rules and regulations promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Health, entitled *Rules and Regulations of the Rhode Island Department of Health Regarding Practices and Procedures Before the Department of Health and Access to Public Records of the Department of Health (R42-35-PP)*.

Section 12.0 ***Severability***

- 12.1 If any provisions of these rules and regulations or the application thereof to any persons or circumstances shall be held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the provisions or application of the rules and regulations which can be given effect, and to this end the provisions of the rules and regulations are declared to be severable.