

Important Information from the Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Board regarding COVID-19 (coronavirus)

The South Carolina Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Board wants you to know that the safety of the public and our licensees is our top priority. In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the Board is providing you with the federal and state COVID-19 resources below. The Board would like to inform you that we do support our licensees continuing to provide services using any method of practice within your scope of practice and that complies with the applicable standard of care. With the closing of schools and various businesses, the Board recognizes the difficulty in providing such services on site and therefore refers its licensees to the guidelines provided by ASHA for telepractice and telesupervision during this time of national emergency as well as any guidance provided by employers, whether in the school, healthcare, or academic setting. If you elect to utilize telepractice and telesupervision, the Board suggests that you review the ASHA resources provided below and be mindful of these key points:

- **Telepractice.** The application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology and audiology professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.
- **Telesupervision.** Supervision, mentoring, pre-service, and continuing education conducted through the use of technology.
- **Practitioner Qualifications.** In addition to adhering to standard South Carolina licensing qualifications, speech language therapy and audiology practitioners using telepractice as a method of service delivery should maintain appropriate education and training; best practice; related competences for the patient populations served and practice settings. The practitioner **must be licensed in the state in which the client receives those services.**

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, the Board will suspend enforcement of South Carolina licensing provisions for SLPs or SLP practices licensed in Border States that have an existing client relationship with an individual located in South Carolina so as to continue to provide treatment by means of telepractice.

- **Billing and Reimbursement.** The Board does not control billing issues, insurance issues or employment contracts. Each licensee should individually investigate the policies, which relate to their practice/learning environments from multiple perspectives such as reimbursement sources, employers, accreditation agencies and malpractice insurance providers to identify any additional requirements or concerns, which may be germane to practice and reimbursement.
- **Ethical Considerations.** Use of telepractice and telesupervision must be equivalent to the quality of services provided in person and consistent with adherence to the Code of Ethics (ASHA, 2016a), Scope of Practice in Audiology (ASHA, 2018), Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology (ASHA, 2016b).

- **State Requirements.** Even though the requirement for in-person supervision is waived during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis, the minimum supervision requirements for Speech Pathology Interns and Speech Pathology Assistants must be met even if earned using telesupervision. See Board's practice act and regulations at following links:
<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t40c067.php>
<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/Chapter%20115.pdf>

As to the Board's policy on telepractice (https://llr.sc.gov/aud/FORMS/2018_SCSpeechTelepracticeFinal.pdf) where the Board states that an initial evaluation must be conducted in person, the Board recognizes the difficulty of imposing this requirement during the current health care crisis and therefore suggests that the practitioner exercise his or her professional judgment to determine what is appropriate in a given situation during the State of Emergency, unless such initial evaluation involves feeding. Where the initial evaluation involves feeding, it must be conducted in person for safety reasons.

- **Clinical Practicum Requirements for SLPA licensure.**

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, the Board will allow 10% of the minimum 100 clock hours of direct client contact/clinical practicum required under S.C. Code Reg. 115-2(B) for SLPA licensure to be earned by telesupervision and telepractice in accordance with these guidelines.

Resources

COVID-19: Use of Telepractice and Telesupervision

<https://www.asha.org/Certification/COVID-19-Use-of-Telepractice-and-Telesupervision/>

Telepractice Services and Coronavirus/COVID-19

<https://www.asha.org/Practice/Telepractice-Services-and-Coronavirus/>

Coronavirus/COVID-19

<https://www.asha.org/Practice/reimbursement/Payment-and-Coverage-Considerations-for-Telepractice-Services-During-Coronavirus/>

Protecting Those You Serve, Co-Workers, and Yourself from COVID-19

<https://blog.asha.org/2020/03/05/protecting-those-you-serve-co-workers-and-yourself-from-covid-19/>

Infection Control Resources for Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists

<https://www.asha.org/Practice/infection-control/>

Update from Council on Academic Accreditation Coronavirus/COVID-19

<https://caa.asha.org/about/coronavirus-covid-19/>

COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel

<https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>

US Department of Education’s Questions and Answers to Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>

CDC: What Healthcare Providers Should Know Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection?

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/caring-for-patients.html>

South Carolina Department of Health COVID-19 Information:

<https://scdhec.gov/health/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>