

THE ROLE OF A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

Speech-language pathologist: A specialist sometimes called a speech therapist or speech pathologist with a role to assess, diagnose, treat and help prevent speech, language, cognitive-communication, voice, swallowing, fluency and other related disorders.

Speech pathologists usually have an M.A., M.S. or Ph.D. in their specialty, as well as a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) earned by working under supervision. Some states in the US also require a state license.

Nature of the Work: A speech-language pathologist works with a full range of communication disorders including the following:

- Evaluate and diagnose speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders. A variety of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods are utilized including standardized tests, and other special instruments, in order to analyze and diagnose the nature and extent of speech, language and other impairments.
- Treat speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders in individuals of all levels, from infancy to the elderly, utilizing an individualized plan with both long-term goals and short-term goals established for each individual's needs.
- Clinical services may be provided individually or within groups, depending upon the work site and individual's diagnosis and needs.

Speech-language pathologists often work as part of a "team", which may include teachers, physicians, audiologists, psychologists, social workers, rehabilitation counselors and others. There are also corporate speech-language pathologists who work with employees to improve communication with their customers.

Work Sites: Speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings including:

- Public and private schools
- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation centers
- Short-term and long-term care facilities
- Colleges or universities
- Private practice offices
- State and local health departments
- State and governmental agencies
- Home health agencies

- Adult day care centers/Centers for developmental disabilities
- Research laboratories

Clients Served: Speech-language pathologists work with a variety of clients including but not limited to:

- Infants with feeding/swallowing difficulties
- Toddlers with delayed language development
- Preschoolers and school age children with articulation and phonological disorders, language delays/disorders, delayed play skill development, delayed pragmatic language skills.
- Children with Autism or other syndromes
- Children with language processing disorders and language-based learning disabilities.
- Individuals who stutter.
- Individuals with voice disorders
- Individuals with difficulty swallowing
- Hearing impaired individuals
- Individuals who have a stroke, head injury, or neurological disorders that affects speech, language, cognition, or swallowing
- Individuals who wish to modify their accent.

Other Related Occupations SLPs Work with as a “Team”:

Audiologists:

- Work with people who have hearing, balance, and related ear problems. They examine individuals of all ages and identify those with the symptoms of hearing loss and other auditory, balance, and related sensory and neural problems.

Physical therapists:

- Provide services that help restore function, improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities of patients suffering from injuries or disease. They restore, maintain, and promote overall fitness and health.

Occupational therapists:

- Help patients improve their ability to perform tasks in living and working environments. They work with individuals who suffer from a mentally,

physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling condition. Occupational therapists use treatments to develop, recover, or maintain the daily living and work skills of their patients. The therapist helps clients not only to improve their basic motor functions and reasoning abilities, but also to compensate for permanent loss of function. The goal is to help clients have independent, productive, and satisfying lives.

Psychologists:

Study the human mind and human behavior. Research psychologists investigate the physical, cognitive, emotional, or social aspects of human behavior. Psychologists in health service fields provide mental health care in hospitals, clinics, schools, or private settings. Psychologists employed in applied settings, such as business, industry, government, or nonprofit organizations, provide training, conduct research, design organizational systems, and act as advocates for psychology.

Special education teachers:

- Work with children and youths who have a variety of disabilities. A small number of special education teachers work with students with severe cases of mental retardation or autism, primarily teaching them life skills and basic literacy. However, the majority of special education teachers work with children with mild to moderate disabilities, using or modifying the general education curriculum to meet the child's individual needs. Most special education teachers instruct students at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level, although some work with infants and toddlers.

Education Requirements for a Speech-Language Pathologist:

In order to become an SLP, a bachelor's and master's degree is required from an accredited university by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. Within each graduate program, students are expected to complete a total of 400 training hours; 25 of which are observation and 375 hours in direct clinical contact. Only upon completion of a graduate program can you then apply for state licensure and begin the process for earning the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA).

According to ASHA, ASHA Certification is defined as a voluntary credential that verifies an individual's achievement of rigorous, uniform, and validated standards that are nationally recognized.

Certification from the American Speech and Hearing Association

Upon completion of an accredited graduate program (which includes all academic coursework and clinical practicum requirements), the student enters the Clinical Fellowship (CF) period. This period is completed under a licensed and certified Speech-Language Pathologist in the setting of their choice for a period of 36 weeks of full-time clinical practice. In addition, applicants for certification must successfully pass an examination in Speech-Language Pathology. Upon completion of CF, the applicant can then complete the necessary paperwork to obtain their Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC).

State Licensing

ASHA defines State Licensure as a mandatory credential that grants permission to practice in a particular state. Each state may differ in their requirements.

State Licensing Laws in Connecticut require a Speech-Pathologist to have:

- a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology is required from an accredited university
- completion of 36 weeks and 1,080 hours of full-time or a minimum of 48 weeks and 1,440 hours of part-time employment under the supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist or audiologist
- passing of written examination

(www.asha.org)

Maintaining Certification and Licensure

Once ASHA CCC's are obtained, SLPs are required to maintain their certification. An SLP must accumulate 30 contact hours of professional development over the 3-year period by attending conferences/seminars, independent study or attending university courses. Each individual state may also require a certain amount of professional development hours to maintain licensure.

Center for Speech and Language Pathology