



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

June 3, 2026

Dr. Eric G. Mackey
State Superintendent of Education
Gordon Persons Building
Post Office Box 302101
Montgomery, AL 36130-2101

RE: SLPA/SLA Certifications

Dear Dr. Mackey:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), we write to express support for the proposed regulations amending the certification of speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs/SLAs) and to recommend a number of amendments to strengthen the language and protections under this profession.

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 247,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology assistants and SLPAs; and students. Over 3,000 ASHA members reside in Alabama.¹

ASHA supports the use of appropriately trained and supervised SLPAs to address the critical needs of students, patients, and clients across work settings. We recommend the following amendments to the current regulations to support this profession and the supervisors who oversee them.

In Section 290-3-2-42, we recommend exclusively using the term “speech-language pathology assistant” rather than “SLA.” “Speech-language pathology assistant” is the more commonly used term in statutes and regulations nationwide. The additional usage of “SLA” may confuse both practitioners and consumers as well as those coming from other states.

For all levels of the SLPA certificates, we recommend that title protection language be added as follows:

“No person shall hold themselves out to be, or use the title speech-language pathology assistant, unless they are certified or licensed by the state to practice as such.”

For all levels of the SLPA certificates, we recommend that scope of practice allowances and restrictions be clearly specified as provided in the ASHA SLPA scope of practice.² We also recommend that direct and indirect supervision be defined to align with this scope and that telesupervision provisions be incorporated, including requiring 100% direct supervision (synchronous or “live” telesupervision is acceptable) of SLPAs for those treating medically fragile students, patients, or clients.

For all levels of SLPA certificates, we also recommend specifying the SLP to SLPA supervision ratio. The number of SLPAs who can be appropriately supervised by a single SLP will depend on a variety of factors, including caseload characteristics, SLPA experience, and SLP experience.³ The Department of Education should also require continuing education for all SLPA renewals or reinstatements.

ASHA also recommends adding language that addresses how the Department of Education will accept SLPAs coming from other states with equivalent standards.

In Section 290-3-2-42, ASHA recommends deleting (e) 2, which would allow a special education coordinator or special education supervisor to serve as the SLPA supervisor rather than an SLP. ASHA's SLPA Scope of Practice requires the supervising SLP to hold graduate-level education, have certification/licensure, complete supervised clinical hours, as well as engage in ongoing professional development (including supervision training).⁴ This training and education makes the SLP uniquely qualified to supervise an SLPA and to oversee the treatment of the complex needs of the students and clients that they serve.

Thank you for considering ASHA's comments on the proposed SLPA/SLA regulations. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact:

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American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
ecrowe@asha.org.

Submitted on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2025). *Alabama* [Quick Facts].

<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-flyers/alabama-state-flyer.pdf>

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Scope of Practice for the Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA)*. <https://www.asha.org/policy/slpa-scope-of-practice/>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid