



March 3, 2020

The Honorable David Wilson  
Alaska State Legislature  
Chair, Senate Health and Social Services Committee  
State Capitol Room 115  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 157

Dear Senator Wilson:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to provide comments on SB 157, which clarifies educational requirements for registered speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs)

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 211,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Over 400 ASHA members reside in Alaska.

While ASHA prefers regulation of SLPAs through licensure, ASHA believes that a registration process helps the state identify SLPAs who are qualified to serve individuals with communication disorders. ASHA appreciates the addition of provisions clarifying the educational requirements for SLPAs, including an associate's degree in disabilities with a speech-language support emphasis from an approved program, or a bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology from an accredited institution. ASHA recommends that the requirement for 100 hours of field work—supervised by a licensed speech-language pathologist (SLP)—apply to student for both the associate's and bachelor's degree programs, which would enable them to qualify for the ASHA assistant certification program.

ASHA's certification program for SLPAs and audiology assistants will be become available this fall.<sup>1</sup> The program provides three educational pathway options for SLPAs:

### **EDUCATION OPTION 1**

Completion of a minimum 2-year SLPA program degree from an accredited institution (e.g., associate's degree from a community college, technical training program, certificate program, or bachelor's degree).

### **EDUCATION OPTION 2**

- Bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders from an accredited institution
- Complete ASHA's Online SLPA Assistant Education Modules<sup>2</sup> or equivalent

### **EDUCATION OPTION 3**

- College degree (associate's or bachelor's) from an accredited institution
- Pass coursework from an accredited college institution in the areas below:
  - Introductory or overview course in communication disorders
  - Phonetics
  - Speech sound disorders
  - Language development
  - Language disorders
  - Anatomy and physiology of speech and hearing mechanisms
- Complete ASHA's Online Assistant Education Modules or equivalent<sup>3</sup>

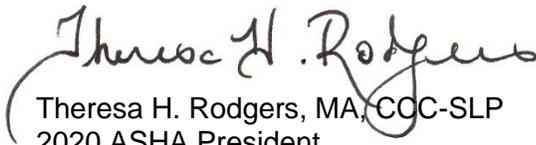
ASHA's SLPA Certification program also requires the completion of the following:

- 1-hour of ethics course,
- 1-hour course in universal safety precautions, and
- 1-hour patient confidentiality training course.

ASHA certification requires high standards and appropriate supervision to ensure that the SLPA is successful.

Thank you for considering ASHA's comments on SB 157. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Eileen Crowe, ASHA's director, state association relations, at [ecrowe@asha.org](mailto:ecrowe@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Theresa H. Rodgers, MA, CCC-SLP  
2020 ASHA President

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<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Assistants Program. (n.d.). *Speech-Language Pathology Assistants Certification: Eligibility Pathways*. Retrieved from <https://www.ashaassistants.org/pathways-speech-language-pathology-assistant/>.

<sup>2</sup> Available prior to program launch in late 2020.

<sup>3</sup> These three courses must be completed no more than 2 years prior to application. These requirements may also be met as part of an academic course.