



AMERICAN  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE-  
HEARING  
ASSOCIATION

March 14, 2018

Lindsay Hanna, President  
Oklahoma Speech-Language- Hearing Association  
Plan Ahead Events  
3126 Boulevard Street #274  
Edmond, OK 73013

RE: Oklahoma Teacher Strike

Dear Lindsay,

I write in response to your e-mail dated March 7, 2018, in which you sought guidance from ASHA regarding an anticipated statewide strike by the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA). From your message and the links you have provided to ASHA staff, it appears that the strike will commence on April 2, 2018. Please know that ASHA stands in support of you and our members during this time.

You mentioned that some of the speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in Oklahoma are members of OEA. This may be advantageous given that unions are in place to help address workplace related concerns of those they represent and can be a resource to SLPs in their decision making process about how to proceed with a work stoppage.

If the schools close as a result of the strike, then school districts are responsible for notifying families. If the strike is prolonged and students miss school, SLPs should document attempts to provide continuity of service, including sending homework packets or providing correspondence to parents as needed for questions regarding services.

If SLPs do not attempt to provide some continuity or suggest other resources for services, client abandonment may become an issue. For your reference, ASHA's [Issues in Ethics Statement on Client Abandonment](#) is available on our website. Furthermore, Principle I, Rule T, of ASHA's [Code of Ethics](#), states that "Individuals shall provide reasonable notice and information about alternatives for obtaining care in the event that they can no longer provide professional services."

The ASHA Board of Ethics has received complaints filed as a result of ASHA members striking without notice to patients/students/clients and leaving them without any continuity of care. In that situation, the interruption of services was substantial, and the school district had legal requirements to provide services. If an SLP's supervisor is aware of an impending strike and has an opportunity to communicate with the families potentially affected by the strike, then the advance communication may assist with defending claims against client abandonment.

For your reference, ASHA also has information on:

- [Missed speech-language sessions in schools](#)
- [Caseload and workload](#)
- [Salaries and wages](#)
- [Advocating for a salary supplement](#)
- [Appropriate school facilities for students with speech-language-hearing disorders](#)

In addition to referencing ASHA's Code of Ethics, SLPs in Oklahoma should be familiar with the Code of Ethics (i.e., Title 690, Chapter 15. Rules of Practice) in the Oklahoma Administrative Code.

Any SLP concerned about the legal obligations in their employment contract, should consider speaking with an employment attorney to clarify their responsibilities.

We appreciate you sharing the additional information from the Oklahoma Department of Education in your e-mail dated March 13, 2018. With respect to the guidance provided on the provision of services to students with disabilities, FAPE, evaluation and IEP timelines and alternative assessments, please check with your office of special education in the school districts or state department of education for specific guidance, we have no additional information to offer on these topics.

Thank you again for contacting ASHA, and please keep us updated as developments warrant. If you or your members of the executive board have any questions, please contact Janet Deppe, director of state affairs or at [jdeppe@asha.org](mailto:jdeppe@asha.org) or Jaumeiko Coleman, director of school services at [jcoleman@asha.org](mailto:jcoleman@asha.org).

Sincerely,

Elise Davis-McFarland, PhD, CCC-SLP  
2018 ASHA President