Universal Licensure Issues in the States

Background

Universal licensure (also referred to as comprehensive licensure) ensures the protection of individuals of all ages who need the services of audiologists and speech-language pathologists by allowing one licensing body in each state to maintain jurisdiction over the practice of the professions. Currently, 18 states require one license to practice speech-language pathology and 29 states require one license to practice audiology (this includes states who do not license audiologists to work in schools, therefore a state license would be required). The remaining states require a separate license or certification to work as a speech-language pathologist in the schools. Universal licensure would also:

- deter the hiring or substitution of other workers who do not have the necessary, accurate, and/or appropriate education, qualifications, and training;
- provide job portability, which would allow those who are qualified for full licensure to work in all settings;
- enhance recruitment of Clinical Fellows and other professionals;
- deter unethical behavior from professionals and employers, such as under/overutilization, fraud, and misrepresentation;
- provide a venue for consumers to seek censure for individuals who have committed malpractice or other unethical behavior; and
- provide the necessary authority to intervene in cases of provider misconduct.

ASHA’s Perspective

ASHA supports universal licensure, which would offer the greatest benefits for audiologists and speech-language pathologists by (1) ensuring that only audiologists and speech-language pathologists with the appropriate qualifications and training would provide services—regardless of work setting—and (2) would increase accessibility to and reimbursement from third party payer sources who stipulate that only licensed/regulated professionals can participate in their plans.

Decision Makers

ASHA is asking legislators and regulatory bodies in the state to support legislation that would enable state licensure boards to maintain jurisdiction over all practicing audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the state and allow a pathway for those in school settings to obtain/maintain teacher certification by presenting evidence of a current unrestricted state license.

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