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Speech-Language-Hearing Association of Virginia Position Statement on Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

It is our association's position that there is a tremendous need to create a regulation system for Virginia SLP Assistants (SLPAs). Initial regulation of SLPAs was put in place in an effort to establish the qualifications for SLPAs, their specific scope of practice, and the responsibilities of the licensed supervisor. SHAV supported this legislation in an effort to develop competencies and to ensure the safety of the public as well as the quality of care for individuals receiving speech-language services. These efforts were a start in the right direction toward the regulation of SLPAs. However, Virginia still lacks a system to register, license, or regulate SLPAs. School-based SLPs within our state report that support personnel often serve in the capacity of speech-language pathology assistants.

Furthermore, many SLPs throughout the state specifically report concerns with the burden of supervision and the training requirements that the use of SLPAs place on the licensed SLP. Instead of improving the quality of care for the public, the licensed school-based SLP, who is already overburdened with excessively high caseloads and increased work place demands by school administrators, will now also be solely responsible for the training and supervision of SLPAs in their school environment. In addition, the licensed SLP in private practice would strongly prefer that professional assistants be regulated by the Commonwealth to assure the protection of the public. Close attention must also be paid to the proposed qualifications of SLPAs, their roles and responsibilities, and the supervision requirements by the licensed SLP. The lack of a registration, licensing, and/ or regulation system of SLPAs puts the public at risk for harm and inconsistent quality of care from those individuals acting as SLPAs. It is our belief that developing SLPA regulations and expanding the scope of practice for SLPAs would lead to better continuity of care, higher quality of service, and help expand SLP's ability to serve clients.

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