

Talking Points for SB72 on Licensing Speech-Language Pathologists and Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

Introduction—Speech-Language Pathology has been a regulated profession since 1969 with the first licensure granted to Florida SLPs. Since that time, an additional 47 states and the District of Columbia have enacted licensure laws for Speech-Language Pathology. South Dakotans deserve the protection that licensure affords. Related professions including medicine, audiology and physical therapy are regulated by license in the State. Given the shortage of qualified SLPs, Speech-Language Pathology Assistants have gained prominence across the country. Properly regulated SLPAs working under the supervision of SLPs provide valuable and timely services.

Call to Action—At the behest of a number of educational institutions in South Dakota a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) program was started at Mitchell Technical Institute. The initiation of this program requires that a defined relationship be initiated between supervising Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and SLPAs in order to ensure that supervisory, ethical and professional standards be met in order to provide quality service to South Dakotans needing speech-language services. Additionally, there has existed for a number of years, a gap in the ability of South Dakota to actually enforce ethical and professional standards in the SLP community. The standard way to deal with these issues is through a process of licensing by an authorized board just as it is with most other medical professions. Today, South Dakota is only one of three states in the nation to not have a licensing requirement or a formalized method of ensuring ethical and professional standards amongst its speech-language professions. The establishment of a State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology is required.

What this Bill will do

- Provide for the establishment of a State Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology under the jurisdiction of the Department of Health with the requisite authority to set standards, provide licensure, collect dues/fees, and provide professional and ethical oversight of the speech-language pathology community to include disciplinary action and suspension or revocation of license.
- Establish ethical and professional standards for South Dakota SLPs and SLPAs.
- Provide for the supervisory guidance needed to allow for the professional use of SLPAs under the supervision of an SLP.
- Provide for uniformity in quality of the delivery of speech-language services in the State.
- Provide for the quality delivery of speech-language pathology services via telecommunications.
- The total expenses incurred by the board may not exceed the total moneys collected.

Costs—The establishment of a Board of Examiners would require that the five members serving on this board be reimbursed for costs and provided with per diem pursuant to 4-7-10.4 just as any other employee of the State government. However, fees collected through licensure would provide funds equal to or in excess of that required for operation of this board thereby providing this capability at no additional cost to the State government.

Implementation—The governor would be required to appoint the five members of the board within sixty days of enactment of the bill.