



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS**

PO Box 16885, Greensboro, NC 27416-0885
Telephone: 336-272-1828 www.ncboeslpa.org Email: dbrown@ncboeslpa.org

September 29, 2022

To: The Jt. Leg. Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee(Virginia.Barlow@ncleg.gov)
The Jt. Leg. Commission on Governmental Operations (govops@ncleg.net)
The Office of State Budget and Management (Charles.perusse@osbm.nc.gov)

From: The North Carolina Board of Examiners for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists

Re: Final Report Required by SL 2020-097, Section 3.20(c)

Please accept this final report on efforts taken by the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists (the "Board") to exercise regulatory flexibility, due to the impacts of COVID-19, while continuing to safeguard the public health, safety, welfare, and economic well-being of citizens and businesses in North Carolina. The Board has taken the following steps:

- Effective March 27, 2020, the Board adopted Emergency Rule 21 NCAC 64. 0219, allowing Speech-Language Pathology Assistants to provide services via telepractice during this declared state of emergency.
- Effective March 19, 2020, in recognition of the COVID-19 crisis and due to the potential unavailability of the most secure platform, licensees were notified that they may follow HHS guidelines if more secure platforms could not be reasonably accessed and if the licensee notifies and receives verbal consent from the patient or caretaker that the use of the platform may not be HIPAA compliant. The Board relaxed enforcement of non-HIPAA compliant platforms if the licensee's use of those platforms is done in good faith within the guidelines given above.
- Effective March 24, 2020, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 130, Section 3, intern students who were unable to attend their clinical work placements due to the outbreak of COVID-19 were allowed to obtain clinical hours to meet the requirements for the NCBOESLPA through; highly concentrated lectures with a required debriefing via video recording or virtual classroom (up to 21 hours this way); the limit for the number of simucase hours accepted was removed; standardized patients were/are accepted in place of actual patients.
- Effective April 24, 2020, the Board adopted emergency and temporary rules 21 NCAC 64 .1101, 21 NCAC 64 .1102, 21 NCAC 64 .1103, 21 NCAC 64 .1104, and 21 NCAC 64 .1105, outlining requirements for Audiology Assistants and a Waiver rule. This was necessary to allow Audiologists the ability to register Audiology Assistants.
- Effective April 8, 2020, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 130, Section 3, the NCBOESLPA allowed licensed providers in other states that do not currently hold a license in North Carolina to provide services via telepractice to residents in North Carolina so long as their state licensure board has put forth allowances for them to do so as well.
- Effective June 12, 2020, the Board ceased enforcing 90-295 (a)(3) of Article 22 Licensure Act for Speech and Language Pathologists requiring clinical hours for speech and language pathologists to be

broken into specified areas. This is in line with the national association's requirements and is less burdensome for students and universities.

- Effective July 10, 2020, the Board ceased enforcing 90-295 (b)(4) of Article 22 Licensure Act for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists requiring clinical hours for audiologists to be broken into specified areas. This is in line with the national association's requirements and is less burdensome for students and universities.

All of the following allowances were made pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 130

- The 30-day grace period under Article 22. Licensure Act for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists. § 90-300. "Renewal of Licenses", was extended to 90 days.
- Electronic copies of clinical practicum summary sheets, required for temporary licensure, were accepted in lieu of hard copies.
- Temporary licensees affected by the COVID-19 crisis were provided extended deadlines to allow them additional time to complete their supervised experience years.
- Telesupervised hours were accepted in place of direct face-to-face hours of supervision for temporary licensees during their supervised experience year.
- The Board relaxed the Clinical Fellowship work week to mirror the American Speech-Hearing-Language Association's (ASHA) work week and also accepted the COVID-19 allowances that were in place with ASHA.
- The Board accepted ASHA's requirements for the Clinical Fellowship Year in lieu of the NCBOESLPA's Supervised Experience Year to allow more flexibility and less confusion for temporary licensees and their supervisors.
- Effective April 10, 2020, the policy requiring that supervisors be within 50 miles of the SLP-Assistant during the workday was temporarily relaxed during the period of the COVID-19 crisis and later retracted the policy completely.
- Due to office processing and postal service delays, the office of the Board did not enforce the policy to hold hard copies of the renewed licenses for 10 days before mailing, when payments were made by check.

In reaching these decisions, the Board considered that the practices of speech-language pathology and audiology were deemed essential services pursuant to Executive Order 121. The Board has not experienced any discernable reduction in applications or renewals as a result of COVID-19.

If you require additional information, please contact me at the telephone number or email address listed at the top of this page.

Respectfully Submitted,



Caroline D. Brown
Executive Director