Proposal for Audiology Assistants

The Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (Board) is considering licensure for Audiology Assistants. If the Board receives legislative authority to license audiology assistants, it would need to establish rules pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Chapter 119 for the qualifications and other requirements for this license type. Before seeking legislative authority and subsequently filing any formal rules through Ohio’s rule-making process, the Board is accepting public comment on the following proposal related to the audiology assistant’s education, qualifications, supervision, and duties. Please submit your comments to this proposal directly to the Board’s Executive Director, Gregg Thornton at: Gregg.thornton@slpaud.ohio.gov by October 6, 2017.

Licensure of Audiology Assistants.

(A) Definitions - As used in this chapter:

1. "Direct supervision" means the supervising licensed audiologist shall be able to provide direct, comprehensive, documented and immediate supervision to the audiology assistant. Direct supervision is demonstrated when the supervising licensed audiologist is present in the room in which the services are being given by the audiology assistant.

2. "Indirect supervision" means the supervising licensed audiologist is in the same physical area and is immediately accessible to provide assistance to the audiology assistant within that particular contact with patient(s) served, including personal contact, telephone, or other means of communication.

3. "General supervision" means services provided by the audiology assistant are under the supervising licensed audiologist's guidance. The supervising licensed audiologist's presence is not required during services, but the supervising licensed audiologist must be immediately available by telephone or other means of communication and able to be physically present as needed.

4. "Surgically modified ear" means any surgical modification performed on the patient's ear which results in a present or permanent alteration of the external auditory canal and/or tympanic membrane (eardrum), including but not limited to myringotomy with pressure equalization tubes, mastoidectomy, meatoplasty, myringoplasty, and tympanoplasty.

5. "Hearing aid" as defined by 4753-8-01 of the Ohio Administrative Code.

(B) A license for an audiology assistant shall be issued only to a person working under an application approved by the board.

(C) An "audiology assistant" is a person who after appropriate training and demonstration of competency, performs tasks that are planned, prescribed, delegated, directed, and supervised by a licensed audiologist, according to an application approved by the board.

(D) The licensed audiologist who signs the application for the assistant shall supervise that particular assistant. The assistant may provide services only under the supervision of the audiology supervisor of record for that applicant. If more than one supervisor is to be involved with the assistant, a plan shall be submitted by each supervisor describing the specific supervision duties for each supervisor.

(E) Qualifications for audiology assistant shall be:
Proposal for Audiology Assistants

(1) completion of a board approved Audiology Assistant Training Program and at least 25 hours of clinical observation in audiology; or

(2) completion of a board approved curriculum of education credits/hours composed of relevant coursework and at least 25 hours of clinical observation in audiology; or

(3) a baccalaureate degree in communication science and disorders or equivalent as determined by the board.

(F) The audiology assistant application shall be filed with the board for approval and application shall include, but need not be limited to:

(1) The location (name and address) where the assistant will work;

(2) The business name and address of the employer of the assistant;

(3) A description of the activities to be performed by the assistant;

(4) A description of any additional training the assistant has received that shall demonstrate the assistant can perform the planned activities;

(5) A description of the direct, indirect and general supervision that the assistant shall receive in the performance of the assistant's duties;

(6) An agreement to abide by the speech-language pathology and audiology code of ethics.

(G) Delegation of tasks shall be conducted by the supervising licensed audiologist.

(1) The supervising audiologist shall determine whether the licensed audiology assistant has the competence to perform specific non-diagnostic and non-prohibited duties before delegating tasks, as set forth in subsection M of this rule.

(H) The supervising audiologist(s) shall provide appropriate levels of direct, indirect, and general supervision for the tasks being conducted by the audiology assistant. The supervising audiologist is responsible for determining the level of supervision that is required based on the activities that are delegated to the audiology assistant. Delegated tasks shall be based on the knowledge and skills of the audiology assistant, the needs of patient(s) served, the service delivery setting, the tasks assigned, except for the duties listed under section N of this rule.

(I) A licensed audiology assistant may not conduct an evaluation which includes diagnostic testing, diagnosis, decision making, statement of severity or implication, case selection or case load decisions.

(J) Although the licensed supervising audiologist may delegate specific clinical tasks to a licensed audiology assistant, the responsibility to the patient for all services provided cannot be delegated. The licensed supervising audiologist shall ensure that all services provided are in compliance with this chapter.

(K) The licensed audiologist shall keep job descriptions, training, supervision and performance records.
Proposal for Audiology Assistants

Records shall be current and be made available to the board within 30 days of the date of the board's request for such records. Records shall be kept for four years after the termination of employment of the audiology assistant.

(L) The licensed audiology assistant may perform specific components of the clinical hearing program if the licensed supervising audiologist determines that the assistant has received the training and has the skill to accomplish that task, and the licensed supervising audiologist provides supervision to ensure appropriate completion of the task assigned to the licensed assistant.

(M) The supervising licensed audiologist may assign duties to the audiology assistant, including but not limited to the following:

1. conduct or participate in screenings;
2. assist in aural habilitation or rehabilitation programs, activities, or therapies;
3. document patient's progress and aural rehabilitation therapy to include supporting data collection and clinical observation;
4. maintain clinical records;
5. prepare clinical materials;
6. assist in research projects, staff development, public relations programs, or similar activities as designated and supervised by the licensed audiologist;
7. maintain equipment by conducting biologic and electroacoustic calibration of audiometric equipment, perform preventative maintenance checks and safety checks of equipment;
8. explain the use and proper care of hearing instruments and assistive listening devices to patients;
9. maintain hearing instruments;
10. provide case history and/or self-assessment forms and clarifying questions on the forms to patients as needed;
11. assist the audiologist with play audiometry, visual reinforcement audiometry, and tasks such as picture-pointing speech audiometry;
12. assist the audiologist in the evaluation of difficult-to-test patients;
13. assist the audiologist with technical tasks for diagnostic evaluation such as preparing test rooms, attaching electrodes, and preparing patients prior to procedures;
14. perform basic non-diagnostic procedures such as pure tone audiometry, otoacoustic emissions screening, immittance screening, or screening ear canal status with an otoscope;
15. conduct basic record keeping and prepare paperwork for signature by the audiologist;
16. coordinate ear mold and hearing instrument records or repairs and other orders;
17. connect hearing aids to computers and use software to verify internal electroacoustic settings.
Proposal for Audiology Assistants

and functionality;

(18) For patients eighteen years of age or older, perform ear impressions when the supervising licensed audiologist is able to provide direct/indirect supervision, as defined in section A of this rule, subject to the following requirements:

(a) demonstrate appropriate training to perform ear impressions under the provisions of paragraphs D, E, and H; and

(b) the supervising licensed audiologist of record must perform an initial and post ear impression otoscopy on patients for a minimum of fifty impressions prior to the audiology assistant performing ear impressions on their own; and

(c) case history shall include all information obtained pertaining to outer and middle ear pathology and history of surgical modification to the ear.

(19) other duties not prohibited in paragraph (N) of this subsection, for which the assistant has been trained and demonstrates appropriate skills, as assigned by the supervising audiologist.

(N) The licensed audiology assistant shall not:

(1) engage in clinical diagnostic decision-making with regard to conducting and/or interpretation of procedures and/or evaluations;

(2) perform any ear impressions on patients under the age of eighteen or on patients with a surgically modified ear which results in permanent or present alteration of the natural anatomy of the external auditory canal and/or tympanic membrane;

(3) make diagnostic statements, or propose or develop clinical management strategies;

(4) perform cerumen management;

(5) determine or modify prescriptive settings of a hearing aid;

(6) represent audiology at staff meetings or on an admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee;

(7) design a treatment program;

(8) determine patient selection;

(9) present written or oral reports of patient information, except to their supervisor;

(10) refer a patient to other professionals or other agencies unless directed by the supervising audiologist;

(11) use any title which connotes the competency of a licensed audiologist;

(12) practice as licensed audiology assistant without a valid license; or

(13) independently engage in the fitting, dispensing or sale of a hearing aid.
Proposal for Audiology Assistants

(O) In any professional context the licensee must indicate the licensee's status as a licensed audiology assistant.

(P) The board may audit a random sampling of licensed audiology assistants for compliance with this chapter.

(1) The board shall notify a licensed audiology assistant and licensed audiologist by mail that he or she has been selected for an audit.

(2) Upon receipt of an audit notification, the licensed audiology assistant and the supervising licensed audiologist shall mail the documentation or information requested by the board.

(3) The licensed audiology assistant and the supervising audiologist of record shall comply with the board's request for documentation and information concerning compliance with the audit.

(Q) Audiology assistants must complete 10 hours of continuing education units, which includes a minimum of two clock hours related to ethics within the two-year licensure period immediately preceding the licensee's renewal application.

(R) An audiologist may not supervise more than a total of two audiology assistants, unless approved by the board. When engaged in an occupational hearing conservation program, the supervising licensed audiologist shall not supervise more the five audiology assistants unless approved by the board.