

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-0665, appointed under the authority of U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this handbook replace the existing Speech-Language Pathologist Qualification Standard in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix G30, in its entirety. Authority is given to the Secretary of VA under 38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees, to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments. The revised standard is effective on the date of this publication. This revised qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [VA Publications website](#). Significant changes include:
 - a. Revises education and experience requirements.
 - b. Revises existing assignments and establishes new assignments.
 - c. Revises knowledge, skills and abilities for assignments.
 - d. Clarifies assignment titles above the full performance level.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Guy T. Kiyokawa
Assistant Secretary for
Enterprise Integration

/s/
Gina M. Grosso
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security and Preparedness

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**[APPENDIX G30. SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST QUALIFICATION
STANDARD
GS-0665
Veterans Health Administration**

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for an appointment as a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA SLPs in the General Schedule (GS)-0665 series, including those assigned to medical centers, clinics, domiciliaries, nursing care facilities, community care settings, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Veteran Outreach Centers, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices and VHA Central Office. In performing these duties, VHA SLPs demonstrate professional knowledge of and skill in applying a wide range of theories, principles and methodology of the practice of speech-language pathology in a medical setting.
2. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Accredited.** A college or university recognized by a regional accreditation organization and a speech-language pathology academic program recognized by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.
 - b. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources (HR) Officer is delegated appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.
 - c. **Approving Official.** The VISN Director or Facility Director is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in the hybrid occupations.
 - d. **Board Certification.** Board certification is voluntary and demonstrates advanced knowledge, skills and experience above the requirements for state licensure. Board certification demonstrates exceptional expertise in a specialty or specific clinical practice area. Examples include but are not limited to Board Recognized Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (BRS-S) or Board Certification by the Academy of Neurologic Communication Sciences and Disorders (BC-ANCDS). Continuing Education alone does not meet the requirements for Board Certification.
 - e. **Clinical Fellowship.** The speech-language pathology clinical fellowship, often referred to as a Clinical Fellowship Year, is considered a training period and is the transition period between being a student enrolled in a master's level communication sciences and disorders program and being an independent provider of speech-language pathology clinical services. The clinical fellowship

involves a mentored professional experience after the completion of academic coursework. Training which is gained after the degree was awarded by a college or university is considered to be creditable experience. A clinical fellowship is 36 weeks of full-time (35 hours per week) experience (or the equivalent part-time experience), totaling a minimum of 1,260 hours. After the clinical fellowship, the individual may be awarded an unrestricted license.

- f. **Creditable Experience.** To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills and abilities associated with the assessing, diagnosing, treating and preventing communication and swallowing disorders with contemporary professional speech-language pathology practice. This knowledge may be evidenced by one of the following:
 - (1) At least one year of active professional practice or equivalent. Active professional practice means paid or non-paid employment as a professional SLP engaged in the practice of speech-language pathology as defined by the appropriate licensing board.
 - (2) Academic course work leading to a doctoral degree in speech-language pathology, communication disorders and sciences or a related field.
- g. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is GS-12.
- h. **Quality of Experience.** Experience is only creditable if it is both of the following:
 - (1) Work as a professional SLP related to the position to be filled; and
 - (2) The work is at a level comparable to speech-language pathology experience at the next lower grade level.
- i. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience as a professional SLP is credited according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, an SLP employed 20 hours a week, or on a 1/2-time basis, would receive one full-time workweek of credit for each 2 weeks of service.

3. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States (U.S.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

b. Education and Experience.

(1) A master's degree, or its equivalent, in speech-language pathology, communication disorders or a directly related field from an accredited college or university and one year of creditable experience (see paragraph 2.g.).

or

(2) A doctoral degree in speech-language pathology, communication disorders and sciences or a related field, from an accredited college or university.

c. Licensure. Individuals must hold a full, current and unrestricted license in a U.S. state, territory, commonwealth or the District of Columbia.

(1) Non-licensed applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for SLP licensure may be appointed to a temporary position as a graduate SLP under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405 (c)(2). Individuals appointed as graduate SLPs may not be promoted to the GS-12 level without being fully licensed.

(2) The requirement for licensure may be waived by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office for individuals engaged in research or academic assignments involving no direct patient care duties, in accordance with current activities.

(3) An SLP who has, or ever has had their speech-language pathology license revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed on probationary status may be appointed only in accordance with the provisions in Chapter 3, section B, paragraph 16 of this part.

d. Failure to Obtain Licensure. In all cases, graduate SLP must actively pursue obtaining the required licensure from the date of their appointment. The Human Resource office staff will provide the unlicensed SLP written requirement to obtain licensure, the date by which the license must be acquired and the consequences for not becoming licensed by the deadline. The written notice must be provided prior to the entrance on duty date. Failure to obtain the required credentials by the prescribed date may result in termination of employment.

e. Loss of Credential. Management officials, in collaboration with HR Office staff, must immediately relieve employees of the duties and responsibilities associated with the occupation who fail to maintain the required certification, both current and in good standing, which may result in separation from employment. An SLP who has, or has ever had, their SLP license revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status may be appointed

only in accordance with the provisions in Chapter 3, section B, paragraph 16 of this part.

- f. **Grandfathering Provision.** All persons employed in VHA in this occupational series or in another occupational series that are also performing the duties as described in the qualification standard on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held, including positive education and licensure. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:
- (1) SLPs may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance level or changed to a lower grade within the occupation, but may not be promoted beyond the full performance level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
 - (2) If SLPs who are retained under this provision leave the occupation, they will lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.
 - (3) SLPs initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard, must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment.
 - (4) SLPs who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.
- g. **Foreign Education.** To be creditable, education completed outside the U.S. must be deemed at least equivalent to that gained in a conventional U.S. program by a private organization specializing in the interpretation of foreign educational credentials.
- h. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.
- i. **English Language Proficiency.** SLP candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

4. **GRADE REQUIREMENTS.** In addition to the basic requirements, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

a. **Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-11.**

- (1) **Education.** None beyond the basic requirements.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the basic requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of principles and techniques in assessing and treating disorders of speech, language, cognitive-communication and swallowing.
 - (b) Knowledge of instrumentation and technologies for assessing and treating communication and swallowing disorders.
 - (c) Ability to adapt clinical procedures and techniques to accommodate unique patient conditions, needs and goals.
- (3) **Assignment.** SLPs at this entry developmental grade level assess and treat patients with routine speech, language, voice, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders following the principles of evidence-based practice and perform clinical procedures with respect to age-specific, unique patient conditions and needs. When assessing and treating patients with complex or rare speech, language, voice, cognitive communication and swallowing disorders, SLPs may require consultation with an SLP at the full performance or higher level.

b. **Research Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-11.**

- (1) **Education.** None beyond the basic requirements.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the basic requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Ability to apply basic scientific methods, basic research design and statistics to conduct research.
 - (b) Ability to recruit research subjects.
 - (c) Ability to administer study protocol.
 - (d) Ability to perform data quality assurance activities including reviewing participant files and data verification.
- (3) **Assignment.** Research SLPs at this entry developmental level screen and recruit eligible study participants based on criteria specified in the research study protocol. They document informed consent and reliably and validly administer study measures, including assessments of language, speech,

voice, swallowing and cognitive-communication and enter data into study databases, following applicable Institutional Review Board (IRB), informed consent, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and applicable Federal regulations for the protection of human subjects. They participate in data quality assurance activities including review of participant files and data verification.

c. Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-12.

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-11 level, completing one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level and possessing a full, current and unrestricted license to practice speech-language pathology.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in applying principles and techniques of diagnosis and treatment associated with contemporary speech-language pathology following evidence-based practice for adult patients exhibiting the full range of speech to the full range of patient populations.
 - (b) Skill in administering and interpreting instrumental swallowing evaluations.
 - (c) Ability to assess the effectiveness of clinical outcomes and adapt clinical procedures and techniques to accommodate unique patient conditions.
- (3) **Assignment.** This is the full performance level. At this level, SLPs independently provide evidence-based assessment and treatment interventions to individuals with a wide range of speech, language, voice, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders. Staff SLPs select, administer and interpret standardized and non-standardized assessment measures. They integrate assessment findings into a patient-centered treatment plan of care and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions by collecting and documenting treatment outcomes. SLPs may be assigned to work in a specific clinical area such as traumatic brain injury, head and neck cancer, movement disorders or spinal cord injury. They may provide clinical training experiences for trainees and students and participate in research activities.

d. Research Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-12.

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-11 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next

lower level and possession of a full, current and unrestricted license to practice speech-language pathology.

- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Skill in applying scientific methods, research design and statistics to conduct research.
 - (b) Skill in disseminating research findings and products in peer-reviewed publications and at scientific and professional meetings.
 - (c) Ability to manage a research budget for each research project.
 - (d) Ability to execute regulatory documents, modifications, approvals, renewals and other required reporting for research programs.
- (3) **Assignment.** This is the full performance level. At this level, research SLPs function independently within the broad scope of a speech-language pathology research program in language, speech, voice, swallowing or cognitive communication. Duties may include collecting, analyzing and interpreting data; creating and updating participant study files; or developing research protocols. Research SLPs may independently perform a variety of administrative tasks, including management of budget, personnel and development, submission of regulatory documents and entry of results into study databases. The research SLPs may disseminate research findings by preparing items such as slides, posters and articles for peer-reviewed publications and presenting at scientific and professional meetings.

e. **Speech-Language Pathologist (Clinical Specialist), GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience/Education.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level and completion of one or more of the following:
- (a) Board certification such as BRS-S Disorders or BC-ANCDS; or
 - (b) Completion of a residency or fellowship post-graduate degree; or
 - (c) College credits (three or more courses) above the graduate degree in the areas relevant to the advance practice.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

- (a) Advanced knowledge in a focused area of contemporary speech pathology practice for contemporary and evidence-based practice in differential diagnosis and treatment.
 - (b) Skill in interpreting advanced specialized clinical management programs in focused areas of contemporary speech-language pathology practice.
 - (c) Ability to provide consultation and continuing education in a specific SLP disorder area.
- (3) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. SLP clinical specialists apply advanced knowledge of scientific principles and contemporary and evidence-based clinical practice in a specific disorder area. SLPs in this assignment use professional judgment to diagnose patients with the most complex disorders not typically seen in routine clinical practice; develop and implement evidence-based and individualized clinical management programs; and render professional opinions. These patients may present with multiple physical, sensory, motor, cognitive or other complicated communication or swallowing disorders that require advanced clinical decision-making skills using complex data. On a regional or national level, SLP clinical specialists serve as subject matter experts for a specific clinical area, adding knowledge to the profession by providing expert consultation, continuing education and mentoring to colleagues, clinical fellows and students.
- (4) **Differentiating Full Performance Level from Clinical Specialist Level.** This is done based on the differences between independent practice, which is required for all SLPs at the full performance level and a clinical specialist. An SLP practicing at the independent level has a generalized knowledge of practice, whereas the SLP clinical specialist has specialized knowledge of practice typically related to a particular diagnosis or patient population. The SLP clinical specialist can be further differentiated from the independent SLP by their ability to expand clinical knowledge in the profession, provide consultation and guidance to colleagues, role model effective speech-language pathology practice skills and teach or mentor less experienced SLPs. An SLP with advanced knowledge, clinical skills and personal qualifications that meet the standard for the SLP clinical specialist must be assigned to a position that requires use of the practice skills to be considered for the SLP grade.

f. **Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of scientific principles and contemporary, evidence-based practice in differential diagnosis and treatment of speech, language, voice, swallowing and cognitive-communication disorders as it relates to a specialized clinical program.
 - (b) Skill in prioritizing program goals and objectives.
 - (c) Ability to build consensus among clinical team members with divergent backgrounds, interests and points of view.
 - (d) Ability to gather and evaluate outcome data to determine program quality and effectiveness.
 - (e) Ability to serve as a resource to other health care providers regarding a specialized clinical program.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. SLPs with special clinical program responsibilities plan, guide and facilitate the work of a specialized, intra- or interdisciplinary clinical team to accomplish program goals and establish well-coordinated work operations. At this level, SLPs are responsible for communicating team goals and objectives to other medical center staff; and serve as a resource to other health care providers. SLPs with special clinical program responsibilities evaluate the program's work by developing quality improvement indicators and monitoring outcome data, making adjustments as needed.

g. **Lead Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.

- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Skill in coordinating team initiatives and building consensus among clinical team members with divergent backgrounds, interests and points of view.
 - (b) Ability to direct the work of others to accomplish program goals and missions.
 - (c) Ability to evaluate program quality to ensure that speech-language pathology practice is consistent with evidence-based practice.
 - (d) Ability to communicate effectively with staff, professionals in other services and leadership to convey speech-language pathology program goals and status.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Lead SLPs will lead three or more SLPs to accomplish the work through the application of leadership, team building skills, group facilitation, coaching and integration of work products and processes. SLP team leads at this level ensure that the assignments of the clinical team are carried out in accordance with policies and procedures of the medical center and principles of contemporary and evidence-based clinical practice. SLPs with this assignment monitor and report on the status and progress of the team's work and make appropriate adjustments to ensure high quality and timely completion of the assigned workload. SLP team leads provide input to the service chief, section chief or supervisory SLP regarding personnel, productivity or other program management issues.

h. Research Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Skill to translate research findings into evidence-based clinical practice.
 - (b) Skill in applying advanced knowledge of contemporary speech-language pathology and related disciplines to research projects.

- (c) Skill in critically evaluating the research of others in peer review or editorial activities.
 - (d) Ability to apply advanced scientific methods in the of innovative research design.
 - (e) Ability to lead a research team.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Research SLPs at this level are responsible for independently or collaboratively developing, conducting, analyzing and interpreting the findings of peer-reviewed VHA or other funded or unfunded research projects speech, language, voice, cognitive communication or swallowing and then demonstrating application to clinical practice. At this level, research SLPs typically lead a research team. They convey scientific concepts, methodological principles and research findings to individuals with diverse technical expertise and translate findings into evidence-based practice.

i. **Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill to translate contemporary and evidence-based speech pathology practice knowledge into clinical procedures.
 - (b) Skill in effective conflict resolution.
 - (c) Ability to analyze organizational and operational problems to develop and implement solutions.
 - (d) Ability to provide clinical and administrative oversight and ensure that section activities are aligned with management goals and objectives.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Speech pathology section chiefs/supervisors at this level manage a speech-language pathology section within a larger service. Section chiefs/supervisors maintain

oversight of the section's diagnostic and rehabilitative speech pathology services. In addition, they implement policies and procedures consistent with management goals, objectives and the medical center mission. Section chiefs/supervisors set priorities and assign responsibilities to accomplish speech-language pathology section goals, ensuring proper coordination between care delivered by the section and the overall health care delivery within the facility. Section chiefs /supervisors maintain oversight for continuous performance improvement within the section. They perform supervisory duties, including initiating personnel actions, conducting performance management; planning, scheduling and assigning work; managing leave; assessing competency; appraising performance; and recommending clinical privileges or scope of practice.

j. **Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in applying effective management practices to direct the work of organizational units within a service.
 - (b) Skill in communicating established performance benchmarks to a service or equivalent organizational department.
 - (c) Skill in implementing continual performance improvement activities to meet performance benchmarks.
 - (d) Skill in conflict resolution in dealing with a diverse range of employees.
 - (e) Ability to analyze data to manage workload, quality, performance and productivity within the service.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Assistant chiefs serve as assistants to the service chief, department head or person of similar organizational rank and share a full scope of delegated managerial responsibilities. Assistant chiefs perform supervision, administrative management and direction of both professional areas in a unified audiology and speech-language pathology service or a speech-language pathology service-level department. Assistant chiefs assess the qualifications and

abilities of current and prospective employees; and oversee the professional practice of peers, including recommending clinical privileges or scope of practice of clinical staff. Assistant chiefs identify and address organizational problems; set priorities; communicate assignments and objectives; advise on work methods, practices and procedures; develop performance standards and conduct performance appraisals. They analyze and use data to effectively manage resources, workload, quality, performance, productivity and access within the service. Assistant chiefs provide oversight and assistance in the training and supervision of students, trainees and fellows; and identify continuing education needs of staff.

k. **Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-13.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-12 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in applying budgetary, regulatory, productivity and quality standards such as those established by the Joint Commission or the Comprehensive Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities to guide provision of clinical services effectively.
 - (b) Skill in communicating service achievements, resource requirements and short and long-term plans to facility leadership.
 - (c) Ability to manage a diverse clinical staff in a service-level department or equivalent organization structure.
 - (d) Ability to align resources to achieve program goals.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Service chiefs at this level are responsible for the management of a unified audiology/speech pathology service or equivalent organizational unit in a small to mid-size medical center. Service chiefs perform supervision, administrative management and direction of all professional areas in a multi-discipline service, ensuring they are consistent with management goals, policies and mission and aligning them with contemporary and evidence-based clinical practice. Service chiefs perform supervisory duties, including initiating personnel actions, conducting performance management; planning, scheduling and assigning work; managing leave; assessing competency;

appraising performance; and recommending clinical privileges or scope of practice. Service chiefs identify and address organizational problems, set priorities, communicate assignments and objectives; advise on work methods, practices and procedures; develop performance standards; and conduct performance appraisals. They analyze and use data to effectively manage resources, workload, quality, performance, productivity and access within the service. Service chiefs have the ultimate responsibility for the training and supervision of students, trainees and fellows and for continuing education needs of staff.

I. **Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-14.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-13 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill to translate management goals and objectives into efficient service operations.
 - (b) Skill in providing clinical and administrative oversight of service operations within complex facilities and/or multiple sites.
 - (c) Skill in conflict resolution to facilitate positive working relationships between employees, team leaders and management.
 - (d) Ability to effectively collaborate with local, VISN and national leadership.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Service chiefs at this level are responsible for managing a unified audiology and speech-language pathology service or equivalent organizational unit in a large, complex or multi-site medical center. They ensure that services provided are of high quality and are consistent with contemporary and evidence-based clinical practice. In providing direction for a specialized and complex service-level department, Service chiefs formulate objectives and priorities and implement plans consistent with the organization's long-term interest, capitalizing on opportunities and managing risks. Service chiefs must demonstrate active problem and conflict resolution skills and maintain effective interdepartmental relationships to accomplish the medical facility's mission and goals. Service chiefs manage budgets, determine resource needs, allocate resources and ensure appropriate service productivity,

efficiency and cost-effectiveness. They perform supervisory duties such as preparing personnel actions, performance management; planning, scheduling and assigning work; managing leave; assessing competencies; appraising performance; and recommending clinical privileges or scope of practice. Service chiefs ensure orientation and training programs are established for staff development and oversee academic affiliations, internship and fellowship programs.

m. Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-14.

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-13 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in applying concepts, principles and methodology in a clinical program sufficient to serve as a recognized agency expert and program authority.
 - (b) Skill utilizing, evidence-based practice and clinical practice guidelines in multiple professional areas for example audiology and speech pathology and to guide the program staff in applying these tools.
 - (c) Skill in analyzing complex organizational problems to develop and implement effective solutions.
 - (d) Skill in communicating effectively with persons of divergent backgrounds, interests and points of view.
 - (e) Ability to serve as a consultant and liaison to local, regional or national coordinators regarding the delivery of rehabilitation care within the specialty program area.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Speech-language pathologists at this level manage all aspects of a distinct speech-language pathology program or service at a regional, VISN or national level and are generally assigned to a national program office at VA Central Office. This assignment would include but not be specifically limited to activities such as a funded telehealth program, center of excellence, polytrauma/Traumatic Brain Injury, coordination of regional or national quality improvement programs and assists in developing educational webinars and conferences.

SLPs perform policy development and identify quality resources and specialty functions unique to the program to optimize program and patient outcomes. SLP program coordinators are knowledgeable about the facility, regional and national policies to ensure compliance. This assignment requires administrative direction and decision-making skills but does not necessarily require formal supervisory responsibility for personnel. SLPs in this role are responsible for strategic planning to ensure the provision of high-quality services meets the needs of the Veterans being served. They are also responsible for developing and implementing short and long-term goals and objectives consistent with the national program office strategic plan. Their responsibilities include operating and managing key clinical, training, research or administrative programs.

n. **Research Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-14.**

- (1) **Experience.** In addition to the basic requirements at the GS-13 level, completion of one year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in applying advanced scientific methods in designing and executing creative and innovative research.
 - (b) Skill to lead a research team with diverse backgrounds, interests and points of view.
 - (c) Ability to manage large research budgets.
 - (d) Ability to evaluate the research of others in peer review or editorial settings critically.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Research SLPs at this level are actively involved as a principal investigator or co-principal investigators in peer review VA, National Institutes of Health (NIH) or other rigorous intramural or extramural funded research programs. The research SLPs are involved in peer review activities for VHA and non-VHA research, including grant reviews for local research committees, VHA Office of Research, NIH, IRB and peer review journals. At this grade level, the research SLPs formulate and guide research on problems that may require novel approaches or sophisticated research methods for significant impact in speech-language pathology or related disciplines.

o. **Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-15.**

- (1) **Experience.** Completion of one year of professional experience equivalent to the next lower grade level directly related to the position being filled.
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience requirements, the candidate must demonstrate the KSAs identified below:
 - (a) Knowledge of speech, language, voice, swallowing and cognitive-communication disorders; military hearing loss and auditory system injuries and disorders; and of related statistics, population health surveillance, military medicine and health policy to guide a national program office.
 - (b) Skill to effectively communicate existing Federal agency policies and regulations for developing strategies and priorities for a collaborative interagency program.
 - (c) Skill in senior management policy development, strategic planning and priority-setting consistent with organizational goals and objectives.
 - (d) Skill in leading senior management officials in policy development.
- (3) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. The national program director is responsible for defining objectives and providing national VA policy guidance in administering a system-wide audiology and speech-language pathology (ASP) program. The program director is responsible for analyzing and evaluating VA ASP programs, including developing plans, procedures and recommendations to ensure efficient and effective functioning of these programs related to the continuum of care. The program director works with all levels of staff within VA Central Office, VA field staff, field representatives of other Federal agencies, state and local governments and community-based organizations to identify needs and develop strategies for Veterans with, or at risk for, auditory and vestibular system injuries/disorders and speech-language pathology disorders. Serves as an information resource and advisor to senior government officials on matters of national significance. Collaborates with other disciplines' executive leads within VA, external professional associations and regulatory agencies outside VA to develop national policies and procedures for advancing ASP throughout the entire VA system. The program director serves as a resource to VA ASP programs by applying advanced knowledge of multifaceted health care delivery systems and their relationship to external review organizations, hospital and service-level operations. As a health care provider with a high

degree of demonstrated leadership, motivation, self-direction and initiative, the program director serves as an expert in clinical treatment modalities as well as administrative and clinical support systems regarding speech, language, voice, swallowing and cognitive-communication disorders and hearing loss, auditory and vestibular system injuries and disorders.

5. DEVIATIONS.

- a. An approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee whose composite record of accomplishments, performance and qualifications, as well as current assignment, warrants such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.
- b. Under no circumstances will the educational requirements be waived. Under no circumstances will the licensure requirements be waived, except as provided in paragraph 3.c. above.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office prior to placement in the position.

Authority: [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, 38 U.S.C. §§ 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration; 7402, Qualifications of appointees; 7403, Period of appointments; promotions; 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments; 7407, Administrative provisions for §§ 7405 and 7406 appointments.\]](#)