

STAFFING

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Speech-Language Pathologist, GS-665, in VA.

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 II-G30 in its entirety. Revised text appears in [brackets]. The new standards are effective on the date of issuance of this handbook. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management](#) Web site. Significant changes include:

- a. Clarifies licensure requirements for graduate Speech-Language Pathologists.
- b. Clarifies requirement for appointees who have ever had a license revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, and/or limited.
- c. Allows licensure requirement to be waived by the Under Secretary for Health for individuals engaged in research or academic assignments involving no direct patient care duties.
- d. Modifies general loss of credential language from paragraph 2d.
- e. Clarifies education and experience requirements at the GS-11 grade level.
- f. Clarifies the staff speech-language pathologist assignment at the GS-12 grade level to indicate that individuals may perform ancillary assignments, including program management duties on an occasional basis, where the complexity and amount of work is not substantial (less than 25 percent of the time).
- g. Clarifies non-supervisory and supervisory assignments at the GS-13 grade level.
- h. Adds an assignment of an advanced practice speech-language pathologist at the GS-13 grade level.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVES: VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

5. RESCISSIONS: VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G30, dated March 17, 2006.

**VA HANDBOOK 5005/39
Transmittal Sheet
August 24, 2010**

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420**

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
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**APPENDIX G30. SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-665****Veterans Health Administration**

1. COVERAGE. The following are requirements for appointment as a speech-language pathologist (S-LP) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA S-LPs in the General Schedule (GS)-665 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 S-LPs demonstrate professional knowledge of, and skill in applying, a wide range of theories, principles, and methodology of the practice of speech-language pathology.

2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS

a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified candidates in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g, this part.)

b. **Education.** A master's degree or its equivalent in speech-language pathology, communication disorders, or a directly related field from an accredited college or university. "Accredited" means 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 (ASHA).

c. **Licensure.** For those grades that require licensure (GS-12 and above), [] the incumbent must hold a full, current, and unrestricted license in a State, Territory, Commonwealth, or the District of Columbia. []

(1) The S-LP must maintain full, current, and unrestricted licensure/registration.

[(2)] Non-licensed applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for S-LP licensure may be given a temporary appointment as a graduate S-LP under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(D). Failure to obtain licensure during that period is justification for termination of the temporary appointment. This may result in termination of employment. [Individuals appointed as graduate S-LPs may not be promoted to the GS-12 level without being fully licensed.

(3) 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.]

[(4)] A S-LP who has, or ever has had his/her speech-language pathology license revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited, or issued/placed on a probationary status may be appointed only in accordance with the provisions in Chapter 3, section B, paragraph 16 of this part.

d.] **Loss of Credential.** An employee in this occupation who fails to obtain licensure/certification/registration within the required time frame, or who fails to maintain the required licensure/certification/registration must be removed from the occupation, which may also result in termination of employment.

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[e.] **Grandfathering Provision.** [] All S-LPs employed in VHA in this occupation on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series and grade held, including positive education and licensure/certification/registration that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. 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)] Such employees [] may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or [changed to lower grade] within the occupation, but may not be promoted beyond the journey level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.

[]

[(2)] Employees 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.

[(3)] Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification/registration that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

[(4)] If an S-LP who was retained [] under this provision leaves [the] occupation, the employee loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of reentry to the occupation.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** Speech-language pathologists must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with chapter 2, section D, paragraph 5a, this part.

3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS

[a.] **Creditable Experience**

[(1)] **Knowledge of Contemporary Professional Speech-Language Pathology Practice.** To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (also referred to as “core competencies”) associated with contemporary professional speech-language pathology practice. This knowledge may be evidenced by one or more of the following:

[(a)] At least 1 year of active professional practice or its equivalent. Active professional practice means paid or non-paid employment as a professional S-LP engaged in the practice of speech-language pathology as defined by the appropriate licensing board.

[(b)] Academic course work leading to a doctoral degree in speech-language pathology, communication disorders and sciences, or a related field.

[(2)] **Quality of Experience.** Experience is only creditable if it is both of the following:

[(a)] Work as a professional speech-language pathologist related to the position to be filled; and

[(b)] The work is at a level comparable to speech-language pathology experience at the next lower grade level.

[(3)] **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience as a professional speech-language pathologist is credited according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, a speech-language pathologist employed 20 hours a week, or on a 1/2-time basis, would receive 1 full-time workweek of credit for each 2 weeks of service.

b. Grade Determinations. In addition to the basic requirements, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

(1) **GS-9**

(a) **Education and Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(b) **Assignment.** Employees at this level serve in a speech-language pathologist career development position.

(2) **GS-11**

(a) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of professional experience as an S-LP equivalent to the next lower level, [or] 3 years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to a doctoral degree, or doctoral degree in speech-language pathology, communication disorders, or a directly related field. For positions involved in research S-LP assignments involving no direct patient care, no additional education or professional experience are required beyond those identified at the GS-9 level. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the [knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) identified for the assignment.]

(b) **Assignments.** Speech-language pathologists at this grade level may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

1. Staff Speech-Language Pathologist. Staff S-LPs at this grade level provide assessment and treatment intervention. If unlicensed, the individual must function under the supervision of a licensed S-LP. [The following KSAs are required:

a.] Knowledge of principles and techniques used in speech pathology;

b.] Ability to evaluate and interpret data;

c.] Ability to communicate information effectively to patients and significant others;

d.] Ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing;

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[e.] Ability to function as a constructive member of a team;

[f.] Knowledge of principles and techniques in diagnosis and treatment of dysphagia;

[g.] Knowledge of, and ability to develop and implement, comprehensive treatment plans.

2. Research Speech-Language Pathologist. Research S-LPs at this grade level serve as research assistants conducting research under the direct supervision of principal investigators or co-principal investigators of higher-grade levels. [] In addition to the KSAs in [subparagraph 1.] above, the following KSAs are required:

[a.] Knowledge of, and ability to apply, appropriate basic scientific methods, basic research design, and statistics;

[b.] Project-specific knowledge of conical and research literature; and

[c.] Knowledge of anatomy and physiology of speech, language, voice, swallowing, applied acoustics and project-specific knowledge of clinical and research literature.

(3) GS-12

(a) **Licensure.** [T]he incumbent must hold a full, current, and unrestricted license in a State, Territory, Commonwealth, or the District of Columbia. []

(b) **Education and Experience.** [C]ompletion of 1 year of professional experience comparable to the next lower level and possession of a full, current, and unrestricted license to practice speech-language pathology. For positions engaged in research S-LP assignments involving no direct patient care, completion of a doctoral degree in speech-language pathology, communication disorders, or a related field is fully qualifying. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the [KSAs identified for the assignment.]

(c) **Assignments.** Speech-language pathologists at this grade level are considered to be at the full performance level and may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

1. Staff Speech-Language Pathologist. Staff S-LPs at this grade level must demonstrate professional knowledge of, and skill in applying, a wide range of theories, principles, and methodologies of the practice of speech-language pathology to a wide range of populations. [Individuals may perform ancillary assignments, including program management duties on an occasional basis, where the complexity and amount of work is not substantial (less than 25% of the time). The following KSAs are required:

a.] Ability to develop coherent treatment strategies;

[b.] Ability to incorporate new clinical procedures sufficient to perform clinical services independently;

[c.] Ability to conduct assessments, provide treatment interventions, and provide consultation to other health care professionals;

[d.] Knowledge of instrumentation used in speech-language pathology;

[e.] Knowledge of principles and techniques used in alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems, diagnosis and treatment of dysphagia, and cognitive-communication disorders;

[f.] Knowledge of principles and techniques used in voice disorders including alaryngeal and trach/ventilator-dependent patients; and

[g.] Ability to perform functions associated with contemporary speech-language pathology practice.

2. Research Speech-Language Pathologist. Research S-LPs at this grade level assist principal investigators or co-principal investigators in peer reviewed VHA, National Institute of Health (NIH), or comparably rigorous intramural or extramurally funded research programs, and may serve as investigators on small or unfunded projects of limited complexity or scope. At this grade level, research S-LPs have responsibility for conducting research under the general supervision of principal investigators or co-principal investigators of higher-grade levels. Research S-LPs at this grade level may have authored one or more publications or presented research findings at a national meeting and may have earned academic appointment at an affiliated medical school or local university, usually at the rank of instructor, lecturer, or equivalent. [] In addition to the KSAs in [subparagraph 1.] above, the following KSAs are required:

[a.] Ability to execute research independently; and

[b.] Knowledge of clinical and research literature.

(4) **GS-13**

(a) **Licensure.** [T]he incumbent must hold a full, current, and unrestricted license in a State, Territory, Commonwealth, or the District of Columbia. []

(b) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level directly related to the position being filled, and must fully meet the KSAs at that level. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the following professional KSAs and demonstrate the potential to acquire the assignment specific KSAs designated by an asterisk (*).

[(c) **Differentiating Full Performance Level from Advanced Practice Level.** This is done based on the differences between independent practice, which is required for all speech-language pathologists at the full performance level, and advanced practice. A speech-language pathologist practicing at the independent level has a generalized knowledge of practice, whereas the speech-language pathologist practicing at the advanced level has specialized knowledge of practice typically related to a particular diagnosis or patient population. The advanced practice speech-language pathologist can be further differentiated from the independent speech-language pathologist by his/her ability to expand clinical knowledge in the profession, provide consultation and guidance to colleagues, role model effective

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speech-language pathology practice skills, and teach or mentor less experienced speech-language pathologists. A speech-language pathologist with advanced practice skills and personal qualifications that meet the standard for the Advanced Practice Speech-Language Pathologist must be assigned to a position that requires use of the advanced practice skills in order to be considered for the advanced practice speech-language pathologist grade.]

[(d)] **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and range of variety, and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Speech-language pathologists at this grade level may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

[**NOTE:** *Incumbents of non-supervisory assignments at this grade level may possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies normally demonstrated by completion of a doctoral training program; or, professional achievements commensurate with advanced board certification or board recognition such as Board Recognition in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (BRS-S) or Academy of Neurologic Communication Disorders and Sciences (ANCDs), however this is not required.*]

[1. **Staff Speech-Language Pathologist (Advanced Practice Speech-Language Pathologist).** This assignment is defined as the ability to provide independent and expert speech-language pathology services in a specialized area of practice. Examples include but are not limited to Traumatic Brain Injury, Polytrauma, etc. Speech-language pathologists at this grade level are advanced practice independent licensed practitioners and must demonstrate ability to apply advanced knowledge, theories, and techniques to a full range of complex patient populations. The advanced practice speech-language pathologist has an increased depth and breadth of practice skills; has expertise in participating in the professional development of colleagues through mentorship and teaching; demonstrates leadership in defining and attending to professional practice issues; and has the ability to expand the conceptual knowledge of the profession. Work involves speech-language pathology services requiring the exercise of mature professional judgment and the flexible use of a wide range of complex speech-language pathology practice skills not typically required in routine speech-language pathology practice. The advanced practice speech-language pathologist has mastered a range of specialized interventions and provides consultation to colleagues, renders professional opinions based on experience and expertise, and incorporates an advanced knowledge of scientific principles and contemporary practice in the differential diagnosis and treatment of speech, language, voice, resonance, swallowing, and cognitive-communication disorders. The following KSAs are required:

- a. Advanced knowledge of normal anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology in the areas of speech, language, voice, fluency, swallowing, and cognition;
- b. Advanced skill to perform and interpret diagnostic tests to a full range of patient populations;
- c. Advanced skill to provide treatment interventions including analysis of instrumental tests of swallowing function and fitting of voice prostheses in the post-surgical management of patients with head/neck cancer, and advanced augmentative/alternative communication technology in a full range of patient populations;
- d. Knowledge of embryology, genetics, nutrition, laboratory values, pharmacology, ethics, compliance, diagnostic imaging, and biostatistics;

e. Advanced knowledge of, and ability to perform, functions associated with contemporary speech-language pathology scope of practice; and

f. Significant professional achievements such as continuing education, leadership, graduate-level teaching, or scholarly works included research articles, presentations, seminar, or workshops.

2.] Speech-Language Pathologist Program Manager. Speech-language pathologist program managers are responsible for providing comprehensive clinical services as well as ensuring that the work assignments of the other members of the clinical team are carried out by performing a range of duties such as distributing and balancing workload among employees in accordance with established work flow or job specialization; assuring timely accomplishment of the assigned workload; assessing the status, quality, and progress of work; making day-to-day adjustments in accordance with established priorities; obtaining assistance from supervisors or managers on problems that may arise. In the absence of a supervisory speech-language pathologist, [speech-language pathologist program managers] will oversee the professional practice of peers. [The following KSAs are required:

a.] Knowledge of contemporary speech-language pathology practice;

[b.] Ability to articulate and communicate to the clinical team the assignment, project, problem to be solved, actionable events, and objectives, as well as advise on work methods, practices, and procedures.

[c.] Ability to coach the clinical team in the selection and application of appropriate problem solving methods and techniques;

[d.] Ability to monitor and report on the status and progress of work, evaluate program quality to ensure that methods, deadlines, and quality have been met; and make adjustments to accomplish the workload in accordance with established priorities; and

[e.] Ability to serve as coach, facilitator, and/or negotiator in coordinating team initiatives and consensus building activities among clinical team members with widely divergent backgrounds, interests, and points of view.

3.] Supervisory Speech-Language Pathologist or Section Chief. Supervisory S-LPs or section chiefs exercise supervision, administrative management, and [technical] direction of the speech-language pathology program in a [speech-language pathology unit or service]. They have responsibility for general and technical supervision of key clinical or training programs and overall technical and administrative oversight of S-LPs depending on grade level. [They may have responsibility for general supervision of key clinical or training programs and overall administrative oversight of audiologists in a unified audiology and speech-language pathology section-level, service-level, or equivalent department. Supervisory S-LPs or section chiefs] develop, organize, direct, manage, supervise, control, and implement policies and procedures in focused clinical programs [and] plan, assess, and evaluate programs to ensure proper coordination between care delivery within the section and the overall delivery of health care. They make decisions that affect staff and other resources with wide latitude of control and independent judgment. They exercise supervisory [] responsibilities such as planning and scheduling work; assigning work to employees; accepting, amending or rejecting completed work; assuring that production and accuracy requirements are met; appraising performance and recommending performance standards and ratings; [but exercise less authority than service chiefs. The following KSAs are required:

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a.] Ability to balance responsibilities and to work with great autonomy;

*[b.] Ability to set priorities, delegate tasks, meet multiple deadlines, analyze organizational problems, and develop and implement effective solutions;

*[c.] Ability to analyze and use data effectively to manage workload, quality, performance, and productivity within the section;

[d.] Skill in interpersonal relationships in dealing with employees, team leaders, and managers;

[e.] Knowledge of, and ability to utilize, evidence-based practices and clinical practice guidelines in a professional area, and to guide the section staff in applying these tools;

[f.] Ability to analyze organizational and operational problems and to develop and implement solutions that result in efficient section operation;

[g.] Skill in problem solving and conflict resolution; and

[h.] Skill in the application and analysis of scientific and clinical literature in a professional area.

[4.] **Assistant Chief.** Assistant chiefs serve as full assistants to service chiefs, department heads, or persons of similar organizational rank, and share a full scope of delegated managerial responsibilities. Assistant chiefs share full responsibility for all professional areas in a service-level department with the service chief. Assistant chiefs exercise supervision, administrative management, and direction of both professional areas in a unified audiology and speech-language pathology service or equivalent service-level department. Assistant chiefs have responsibility for general or technical supervision of key clinical or training programs within the service, and overall technical and administrative oversight of S-LPs. [The following KSAs are required:

*a.] Ability to supervise, motivate, and manage effectively a diverse clinical staff;

*[b.] Skill in assessing qualifications and abilities of current and prospective employees;

[c.] Ability to develop productivity standards applicable to a service or equivalent organizational department;

[d.] Ability to organize work, set priorities, delegate tasks and responsibilities, and meet multiple deadlines for the service; and

[e.] Ability to adapt to new and changing work conditions, staffing, and contingencies.

[5.] **Service Chief.** Service chiefs at this grade level have overall responsibility for a service-level department, or its organizational equivalent in small or mid-sized facilities. These individuals have responsibility for general supervision of clinical and/or training programs, and overall technical and administrative oversight for operations within the service. Service chiefs develop, organize, direct,

manage, supervise, control, and implement policies and procedures for complex service-level departments. They have overall responsibility for planning, assessing, and evaluating programs to ensure proper coordination between care delivered by the service and the overall delivery of health care within the facility. Service chiefs make decisions that affect section or assistant chiefs (if applicable), clinical and clerical staff, and other resources associated with the department with great autonomy. Their responsibilities may include full responsibility for developing and directing educational and training programs; negotiating affiliation agreements with academic partners; setting training objectives; delegating responsibilities to subordinate section or assistant chiefs (if applicable); planning, and scheduling work; assigning work to employees; accepting, amending, or rejecting completed work; assuring that production and accuracy requirements are met; appraising performance and recommending performance standards and ratings; assigning delineated clinical privileges; approving leave; and effecting all levels of disciplinary measures. Service chiefs exercise supervision, administrative management, and direction of both professional areas in a unified audiology and speech-language pathology service or equivalent service-level department in other rehabilitation areas. [The following KSAs are required:

*a.] Ability to supervise, motivate, and manage effectively a diverse clinical staff applicable to a service-level department in small or mid-sized facilities;

*b.] Skill in assessing qualifications and abilities of current and prospective employees;

c.] Ability to establish and monitor productivity standards and production and performance priorities;

d.] Comprehensive knowledge of, and ability to, apply administrative and human resources policies effectively;

e.] Demonstrated ability to organize work, set priorities, delegate tasks and responsibilities, and manage and direct the work of others to accomplish program goals and missions;

f.] Ability to adapt to new and changing work conditions, contingencies, and staffing;

g.] Ability to translate management goals and objectives into well-coordinated and controlled service operations; and

h.] Knowledge of, and ability to manage, budgets for a service-level department in a small or mid-sized facility.

[6.] Research Speech-Language Pathologist. Research S-LPs at this grade level are actively involved as principal investigators or co-principal investigators in peer reviewed VHA, NIH, or comparably rigorous intramural or extramurally funded research programs. Responsibilities may include peer review activities for VA and non-VA research, e.g., grant review for VA or NIH proposals or local research service committees, e.g., Research and Development (R&D), Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D), Institutional Review Board (IRB), etc. At this grade level, research S-LPs have responsibility for formulating or conducting research on problems of considerable scope and complexity. Researchers at this grade level work with substantial freedom in identifying, defining, and selecting problems for study. They typically will have authored one or more publications in peer-reviewed literature; demonstrated a

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consistent record of presentation of findings at national scientific meetings; may have earned an academic appointment at an affiliated medical school or local university, usually at the rank of Assistant Professor or equivalent; and have responsibility for funded research projects. [The following KSAs are required:

- a.] Knowledge of, and ability to apply, advanced scientific methods in the design and execution of creative and innovative research;
- [b.] Ability to convey scientific concepts and methodological principles to individuals with diverse levels of technical expertise;
- [c.] Ability to apply advanced theories and techniques; and
- [d.] Advanced knowledge of contemporary speech-language pathology and related disciplines.

[7.] **Special Clinical Program Responsibilities.** Speech-language pathologists with special clinical program responsibilities, e.g., inter-disciplinary teams or highly specialized clinical programs or clinical subunits such as dysphagia, traumatic brain injury, nursing home care, stroke management, spinal cord injury, or head/neck cancer program, in combination with professional accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, may be appointed to the GS-13 grade level. Examples of professional accomplishments may include attainment of advanced degrees, contributions resulting in publications, presentations at national professional meetings, or other scholarly works, or specialty or board certification, e.g., Board Certification in neurologic communication disorders by the Academy of Neurologic Communication Disorders and Sciences (BC-NCD), or ASHA specialty certification. Typically, S-LPs with these responsibilities apply advanced theories and techniques to special patient populations, provide professional advice and counseling, and provide consultation in specialized areas of speech-language pathology. They manage complex and difficult patients with multiple physical, sensory, motor, cognitive, or other issues that complicate communication or swallowing status, and involve multiple clinical management options, difficult clinical decision making, complex data, and high risk of complications, morbidity, or mortality, e.g., tracheoesophageal voice prostheses and laryngectomy tubes, ventilator-dependent and tracheostomized patients with speaking valves, and those receiving poly-pharmacology impacting on communication. [The following KSAs are required:

- a.] Advanced knowledge in a focused area of contemporary speech-language pathology practice;
- [b.] Ability to articulate and communicate goals, objectives, and focused initiatives to an inter-disciplinary team, specialized clinical program, or subunit; as well as guiding the team members on work methods, practices, and procedures;
- *[c.] Ability to monitor and evaluate the work of an inter-disciplinary team, specialized clinical program, or subunit; and to make adjustments in procedures or practices to accomplish the program goals; and
- [d.] Ability to serve as coach and facilitator in coordinating program or team initiatives and consensus building activities among clinical team members with widely divergent backgrounds, interests, and points of view.

(5) **GS-14**

(a) **Licensure.** [T]he incumbent must hold a full, current, and unrestricted license in a State, Territory, Commonwealth, or the District of Columbia. []

(b) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level directly related to the position being filled, and must fully meet the KSAs at that level. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the following professional KSAs and demonstrate the potential to acquire the assignment specific KSAs designated by an asterisk (*):

(c) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and range of variety, and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Speech-language pathologists at this grade level demonstrate exceptional achievement, professional competence, and leadership and may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

1. Service Chief. Service chiefs have broad and overall responsibility for a service-level department, or its organizational equivalent. They manage substantive parts of medical centers that deliver specialized, complex, professional services, and significantly impact the care provided to Veterans. They have responsibility for general supervision of clinical and/or training programs, and overall technical and administrative oversight for operations within the service. Service chiefs develop, organize, direct, manage, supervise, control, and implement policies and procedures for complex service-level departments. They have overall responsibility for planning, assessing, and evaluating programs to ensure proper coordination between care delivered by the service and the overall delivery of health care within the facility. Service chiefs make decisions that affect section or assistant chiefs (if applicable), clinical and clerical staff, and other resources associated with the department with great autonomy. Their responsibilities may include full responsibility for developing and directing educational and training programs; negotiating affiliation agreements with academic partners; setting training objectives; delegating responsibilities to subordinate section or assistant chiefs (if applicable); planning, and scheduling work; assigning work to employees; accepting, amending, or rejecting completed work; assuring that production and accuracy requirements are met; appraising performance and recommending performance standards and ratings; assigning delineated clinical privileges; approving leave; and effecting all levels of disciplinary measures. Service chiefs exercise supervision, administrative management, and direction of both professional areas in a unified audiology and speech-language pathology service or equivalent service-level department in other rehabilitation areas. [The following KSAs are required:

*a.] Ability to supervise, motivate, and manage effectively a diverse clinical staff applicable to a service-level department in a large, complex, or multi-division facility;

*b.] Skill in assessing qualifications and abilities of current and prospective employees;

c.] Ability to establish and monitor productivity standards and production and performance priorities;

d.] Ability to organize work, set priorities, delegate tasks and responsibilities;

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[e.] Ability to manage and direct the work of others to accomplish program goals and missions;

[f.] Ability to accommodate to new and changing work conditions and contingencies, staffing; and

[g.] Ability to translate management goals and objectives into well-coordinated and controlled service operations.

2. [] Program Manager. [P]rogram managers have overall responsibility for management and direction of large, geographically-separated, integrated health care facilities or a Network; planning, coordinating, and evaluating complex inter-disciplinary services across the full continuum of care including not only speech-language pathology but also other focused rehabilitation, ancillary, or other health care services. In the absence of a supervisory speech-language pathologist, this assignment is responsible for oversight of clinical competence and performance of peers. [The following KSAs are required:

*a.] Skill in managing and directing work to include setting priorities and delegating tasks, meeting multiple deadlines, analyzing complex organizational problems in order to develop and implement effective solutions;

[b.] Ability to balance responsibilities applicable to a large service-level or multi-service organizational environment and to work with great autonomy;

[c.] Skill in interpersonal relationships in dealing with employees, team leaders, and managers;

[d.] Advanced knowledge of and ability to utilize evidence-based practices and clinical practice guidelines in multiple professional areas, and to guide the program staff in applying these tools;

[e.] Skill in problem solving and conflict resolution; and

[f.] Knowledge of, and ability to manage, budgets for a large, integrated services including not only speech-language pathology but also other focused rehabilitation, ancillary, or other health care services.

3. Research Speech-Language Pathologist. At this level, research S-LPs are involved in peer review activities for VHA and non-VHA research, e.g., grant review for VHA or NIH proposals, local research service committees, e.g., R&D, HSR&D, IRB, etc., or serve as consulting editors for peer-reviewed journals. At this grade level, research S-LPs have responsibility for formulating and guiding research on problems that are difficult to define or require unconventional, novel approaches, or sophisticated research methods. Research S-LPs at this grade level have achieved significant professional recognition by making scientific contributions to research with potential for significant impact in speech-language pathology and related disciplines. They typically have authored one or more publications of considerable interest and value to the field in peer-reviewed professional literature; may have a consistent record of presentation of findings at national scientific meetings; have earned an academic appointment at an affiliated medical school or local university, usually at the rank of associate professor or equivalent; and have responsibility for funded research projects. [The following KSAs are required:

- a.] Knowledge of, and ability to advance, scientific methods in the design and execution of highly creative, innovative, or complex research;
- [b.] Ability to lead and motivate a research team with diverse backgrounds, research interests, and points of view;
- [c.] Ability to manage large research budgets;
- [d.] Knowledge of, and ability to, evaluate critically the research of others in peer review or editorial settings;
- [e.] Ability to convey scientific concepts and methodological principles to individuals with diverse levels of technical expertise;
- [f.] Ability to apply advanced research theories and techniques, demonstrating exceptional depth of knowledge of clinical research literature;
- [g.] Advanced knowledge of contemporary speech-language pathology, neuroscience, and related disciplines;
- [h.] Advanced knowledge of anatomy and physiology of speech, language, voice, and swallowing, neuroanatomy, applied acoustics; and
- [i.] Advanced knowledge of normal and abnormal communication and swallowing function.

4. DEVIATIONS

- a. The appointing official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for S-LPs in VHA whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant 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 2c.]
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. §§ 7402, 7403.