

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Audiologist/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 Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist Qualification Standard in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix II-G31 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 that only those individuals who hold an “audiologist/speech-language pathologist” position title prior to **March 17, 2006** are subject to the provisions of this standard.
 - b. Clarifies licensure requirement in GS-12 and above grade level.
 - c. Adds a note to indicate that all audiologists who perform compensation and pension (C&P) examinations are considered to be performing direct patient care duties and must possess a full, current, and unrestricted license to practice audiology/speech-language pathology.
 - d. Clarifies the staff audiologist/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).
- 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 G31, Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist Qualification Standard, dated March 17, 2006.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary for
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**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
John U. Sepúlveda
Assistant Secretary for Human Resources
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**APPENDIX G31. AUDIOLOGIST/SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-665
Veterans Health Administration**

1. COVERAGE. The following are requirements for appointment as an audiologist/speech-language pathologist (A/S-LP) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA A/S-LPs in the General Schedule (GS)-665 series. VHA A/S-LPs provide clinical service to Veterans and other VA beneficiaries in VA medical centers, clinics, domiciliaries, nursing care facilities, community care settings, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Veterans Outreach Centers, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices, and VHA Central Office. In performing these duties, VHA A/S-LPs demonstrate professional knowledge of, and skill in applying, a wide range of theories, principles, and methodology in the practice of both audiology and speech-language pathology.

[a.] Only those individuals who hold an “audiologist/speech-language pathologist” position title prior to [March 17, 2006] are subject to the provisions of this standard. **Initial appointments of new employees as an “audiologist/speech-language pathologist” will not be permitted.** In unusual circumstances, A/S-LPs may be appointed or re-appointed under this standard using waiver procedures. See Section 4, Paragraph 4 “Deviations,” this part.

[b.] Supervisory A/S-LPs will be appointed under either the Audiologist Qualification Standard or Speech-Language Pathologist Qualification Standard. The applicable qualification standard will depend on the position and the nature of the work. In cases where a supervisory A/S-LP has administrative or managerial responsibilities over both audiology and speech-language pathology areas, the applicable standard will be determined by (1) the qualifications of the person applying for the position, (2) the predominance of work in each area, and (3) the needs of the facility.

2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS

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

b. **Education.** A master’s degree or its equivalent in audiology or hearing science from an accredited college or university; or, a master’s degree, or its equivalent, in speech-language pathology, communication sciences and disorders, or a related field, from an accredited college or university. “Accredited” means a college or university [recognized] by a regional accreditation organization and an audiology or speech-language pathology program [recognized] by the Council on Academic Accreditation of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

NOTE: *[Effective] January 1, 2007, the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA) in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the ASHA accredit[s] only doctoral degree programs in audiology or hearing science.*

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

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

[NOTE: All A/S-LPs who perform compensation and pension (C&P) examinations are considered to be performing direct patient care duties, and must possess a full, current, and unrestricted license to practice A/S-LP (38 CFR 4.85).]

(2) An A/S-LP who has, or has ever had, his/her audiology and/or speech pathology 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.

[(3)] **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.

[(4)] 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.

[]

d. Grandfathering Provision. [] All [A/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 employee who was retained in an occupation listed in 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) under this provision leaves that 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.

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

f. **English Language Proficiency.** A/S-LPs 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 Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Practices.** To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics associated with contemporary professional audiology and 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 audiologist and speech-language pathologist engaged in the practice of audiology and speech-language pathology as defined by the appropriate licensing boards.

[(b)] Academic course work leading to a doctoral degree in audiology, speech-language pathology, or directly related fields.

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

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

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

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

b. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining grades.

(1) GS-9

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

(b) **Assignment.** Employees at this level serve in A/S-LP career development positions.

**PART II
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(a) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of professional experience as an A/S-LP equivalent to the next lower level; or 3 years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to a doctoral degree; or a doctoral degree in audiology or speech-language pathology, communication sciences and disorders, or a related field. For positions involved in research A/S-LP assignments involving no direct patient care, no additional education or professional experience is 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.** A/S-LPs at this grade level may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

1. Staff Audiologist/Speech Language Pathologist. Staff A/S-LPs at this grade level perform clinical assessment and treatment intervention. If unlicensed in either field, the individual must function under the supervision of a licensed A/S-LP, audiologist, or speech-language pathologist. If licensed in one field only, the A/S-LP must be supervised by a licensed A/S-LP or licensed audiologist or speech-language pathologist depending on the unlicensed specialty. [The following KSAs are required:

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

b.] Ability to communicate orally and in writing;

c.] Ability to communicate information effectively to patients, families, and other health care professionals;

d.] Knowledge of the principles and techniques in the assessment and treatment of auditory and balance disorders and the diagnosis and treatment of dysphagia;

e.] Knowledge of, and ability to develop and implement, comprehensive treatment plans; and

f.] Ability to function as a constructive member of a team.

2. Research Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist. Research A/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 level. [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.] Ability to communicate orally and in writing; and

c.] Knowledge of anatomy, physiology, acoustics, speech, language, voice, swallowing, communication, psychoacoustics, and auditory/vestibular pathophysiology, 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 both areas 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 both audiology and speech-language pathology. For positions involved in research audiology/speech-language pathology assignments involving no direct patient care, completion of a doctoral degree in audiology, speech-language pathology, communication, hearing science, or a related field is fully qualifying. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the [KSAs identified for the assignment.]

(c) **Assignments.** A/S-LPs 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 Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist. Staff A/S-LPs at this grade level must demonstrate professional knowledge of, and skill in applying, a wide range of theories, principles, and methodology of the practices of both audiology and 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 sufficiently to perform clinical services independently;

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

[d.] Knowledge of contemporary audiology and speech-language pathology practices; and

[e.] Ability to perform functions associated with contemporary audiology and speech-language pathology scope of practice.

2. Research Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist. Research A/S-LPs at this grade level assist principal investigators or co-principal investigators in peer reviewed VA, National Institutes 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 A/S-LPs have responsibility for conducting research under the general administrative direction of principal investigators or co-principal investigators of higher grade levels. Research A/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 an 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:

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a.] Ability to execute research independently;

[b.] Knowledge of clinical and research literature;

[c.] Knowledge of the principles and techniques in the assessment and treatment of auditory and balance disorders, and communication and swallowing disorders; and

[d.] Knowledge of anatomy, physiology, language, voice, swallowing, acoustics, applied acoustics, communication, neuroscience and auditory/vestibular pathophysiology.

[e.] **Ancillary Assignments.** Individuals may perform program management duties on an occasional basis, where the complexity and amount of work is not substantial enough to qualify for the GS-13 level.

[(4)] **GS-13**

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

(b) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of professional 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. A/S-LPs at this grade level may be appointed to one of the following assignments:

1. Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist Team Leader. A/S-LP clinical team leaders are responsible to program or service managers for 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 arise. Team leaders exercise authority that is routine or technical in nature but does not require the consistent exercise of independent judgment. [The following KSAs are required:

a.] Knowledge of contemporary audiology and 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.

2. Research Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist. Research A/S-LPs at this grade level are actively involved as principal investigators or co-principal investigators in peer reviewed VA, NIH, or comparably rigorous intramural or extramurally funded research programs. At this grade level, research A/S-LPs have responsibility for formulating or conducting research on problems of considerable scope and complexity. Research A/S-LPs at this grade level work with substantial freedom in identifying, defining, and selecting problems for study. At this grade level, research A/S-LPs are mature, competent, and productive workers. They have typically authored one or more publications of considerable interest in the peer-reviewed literature; demonstrated a consistent record of presentation of findings at national scientific meetings; may have earned an academic appointment at the 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 audiology and speech-language pathology practice and related disciplines.

(5) **GS-14**

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

(b) **Education and Experience.** Completion of 1 year of professional 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. A/S-LPs at this grade level may only be appointed to research assignments.

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1. Research Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist. At this grade level, research A/S-LPs are actively involved as principal investigators or co-principal investigators in peer reviewed VA, NIH, or comparably rigorous intramural or extramurally funded research programs. They are involved in peer review activities for VA and non-VA research, e.g., grant review for VA or NIH proposals, local research service committees, e.g., Research and Development (R&D), Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D), Institutional Review Board (IRB), etc.; or serve as consulting editors for peer-reviewed journals. At this grade level, research A/S-LPs have responsibility for formulating and guiding research on problems that are difficult to define or require unconventional or novel approaches, or sophisticated research methods. Research A/S-LPs at this grade level have achieved significant professional recognition by making scientific contributions to research with potential for significant impact in audiology, hearing science, speech-language pathology, or related disciplines. They have typically authored one or more publications of considerable interest and value to the field in the peer-reviewed professional literature; have a 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 associate 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 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 theories and techniques, demonstrating exceptional depth of knowledge of clinical research literature;

g.] Advanced knowledge of contemporary audiology and speech-language practice and related disciplines;

h.] Advanced knowledge of anatomy, physiology, physiology of speech, acoustics, applied acoustics, communication, neuroscience, psychoacoustics, auditory/vestibular pathophysiology, language, voice, swallowing, and neuroanatomy;

i.] Advanced knowledge of normal and abnormal auditory and balance function; and

j.] 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 A/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 or 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.