

June 5, 2015

Michael J. Zagarella, AuD, CCC-A, President
West Virginia Board of Examiners for
Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
99 Edmiston Way
Box 11, Suite 214
Buckhannon, WV 26201

Re: Proposed Changes to Title 29, Series 1, Legislative Rule Governing Licensure of Speech-Pathology and Audiology

Dear Dr. Zagarella:

The American Academy of Audiology (the "Academy") is the world's largest professional organization of, by, and for audiologists, representing over 12,000 members. The Academy promotes quality hearing and balance care by advancing the profession of audiology through leadership, advocacy, education, public awareness, and support of research. The Academy appreciates the opportunity to offer comments in response to the announcement of proposed changes to West Virginia's legislative rule (Title 29, Series 1) governing licensure of speech-pathology and audiology. The Academy has reviewed the legislative rule governing licensure for audiology and respectfully submits the following points for your consideration.

§29-1-4. Qualifications for licensure in Audiology

Section 4.1 discusses eligibility for licensure by the Board as an audiologist. One of the criteria for licensure eligibility states the following: 4.1.c. Possess at least a master's degree or equivalent in Audiology that consists of coursework approved by the Council of Academic Accreditation (CAA);

In reviewing this section, the Academy strongly urges the WVBESLPA to modify the educational requirements for licensure eligibility to reflect the current landscape in degree requirements. Throughout the current law, there are a number of references, including section 4.1.c, referencing "Master's degree or equivalent." These references should be revised to reflect that a doctoral degree in audiology is the current entry level degree for audiology licensure. As such, now that clinical experience is part of the doctoral level degree program, all separate references to the clinical fellowship year (CFY) in both section 4.1.f and section 13 should be removed.

Other states have included grandfathering language for audiologists who possess a Master's degree that graduated before the change in degree requirements. For reference, the Academy

would like to draw your attention to grandfathering language from Kentucky, a state that neighbors West Virginia:

Kentucky:

(a) Provide either a certified university transcript conferring a master's degree in audiology prior to January 1, 2007, and show evidence of completion of a postgraduate professional experience as set forth in administrative regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter if the applicant has not held an interim license in audiology; or provide a certified university transcript conferring a doctorate degree in audiology from an accredited program, as determined by the board;¹

Additionally, the Academy recommends that the WVBESLPA also consider alternative language that represents the current landscape in audiology education accreditation. The Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE), not referenced in the current language, is an active accrediting body for audiology education and received recognition and approval from the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 2012. The Academy urges the WVBESLPA to recognize the ACAE in section 4.1.c., or to adopt language that is more neutral and inclusive.

The Academy would also like to address the wording of section 4.1.f: Authenticate post-graduate professional experience requirements by submitting verification of the certificate of clinical competence (CCC) issued by ASHA. Applicants not seeking the certificate of clinical competence shall submit a completed clinical fellowship year report on a form prescribed by the Board and related documentation as described in section 4.1.3;

Again, because professional experience is now part of the doctoral level degree, applicants should demonstrate that they have graduated from an accredited program and passed a national examination in audiology. The language in 4.1f refers to the CFY and so should be removed.

Finally, the Academy would like to recommend a change to section 4.1.g: Obtain a passing score on the national examination in the area of Audiology. The Board recognizes only the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) specialty area examinations. The Academy strongly suggests changing the reference to "Educational Testing Service's (ETS)" to "a national exam." The Academy recognizes that ETS currently facilitates the national exam in audiology; however, there has been recent dialogue surrounding the need to explore the development of other

¹ Kentucky Audiology Licensure Law: **334A.185 Licensure requirements for audiologist**
Lhttp://www.slp.ky.gov/Documents/Speech%20Language%20Pathology%20and%20Audiology%20laws%20and%20regulations%202013.pdf

exams that more accurately reflect the necessary knowledge base and skillset required for entry level practitioners. By proactively adopting more general language to describe the national examination for audiology, the WVBESLPA will avoid having to make adjustments to this language should future changes occur.

§29-1-~~12~~13. Postgraduate Professional Experience. (Also known as Clinical Fellowship Year)

As previously discussed, the Academy urges the WVBESLPA to remove all references to the CFY, as clinical experience is part of the doctoral level degree program. The Academy would also like to raise specific concerns regarding the language of section 13, specifically the wording of subsections, 6 and 9 as it relates to requiring supervisors to hold their ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) in order to supervise students during their postgraduate professional experience. The specific language is referenced below:

~~12~~13.6. Only individuals holding current West Virginia licensure in speech-language pathology or audiology and the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) are eligible to supervise applicants during the postgraduate professional experience.

1213.9. Since one purposes of the clinical fellowship year is to improve the clinical effectiveness of the clinical fellow, supervisors shall share and discuss their evaluations with the clinical fellow throughout the clinical fellowship year...All supervisors shall hold West Virginia licensure in the appropriate area and the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC).

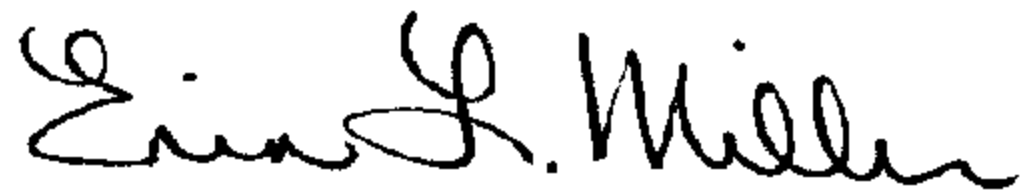
The Academy firmly believes that state licensure should be the only requirement for supervising students. A professional license is a way for a state to grant its legal authority for an individual to practice audiology within a designated scope of practice. Professional certification is a voluntary process where individual audiologists demonstrate that they have met the predetermined qualifications or standards set forth by a specific organization, in this case the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. For the purposes of supervising students, state licensure should be the only qualification required of supervisors.

The Academy deems it important to note that current standards for accreditation set forth by the Council on Academy Accreditation (CAA) do not require clinical preceptors in audiology to hold the ASHA (CCC). Further, there is no evidence to suggest that individuals who hold voluntary certification, such as the CCC-A, are more highly- trained or qualified to supervise students than individuals that hold state licensure. In fact, imposing such requirements during the postgraduate professional experience is viewed by some legal experts and other stakeholders as a violation of antitrust law. As previously stated, state licensure provides the legal right for audiologists to practice within their respective states and should remain the only requirement for supervising students.

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The Academy would like to thank the WVBESLPA for the opportunity to offer comments in response to the proposed changes to the legislative rule governing licensure for audiology. We hope that the WVBESLPA will take the Academy's comments into consideration when finalizing the proposed changes. Please contact Kate Thomas, director of payment policy and legislative affairs at 703-226-1029 or kthomas@audiology.org should need additional information or clarification regarding the Academy's comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin L. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E".

Erin L. Miller, AuD
President
American Academy of Audiology