



Speech Language Pathology

Speech-language pathologists, sometimes called speech therapists, assess, diagnose, treat, and help to prevent disorders related to speech, language, cognitive-communication, voice, swallowing, and fluency. Speech-language pathologists work with people who cannot produce speech sounds or cannot produce them clearly; those with speech rhythm and fluency problems, such as stuttering; people with voice disorders, such as inappropriate pitch or harsh voice; those with problems understanding and producing language; those who wish to improve their communication skills by modifying an accent; and those with cognitive communication impairments, such as attention, memory, and problem solving disorders. They also work with people who have swallowing difficulties.

Education and Training

Most speech-language pathologist jobs require a master's degree. In 2007, more than 230 colleges and universities offered graduate programs in speech-language pathology accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. While graduation from an accredited program is not always required to become a speech-language pathologist, it may be helpful in obtaining a license or may be required to obtain a license in some States. Speech-language pathology courses cover anatomy, physiology, and the development of the areas of the body involved in speech, language, and swallowing; the nature of disorders; principles of acoustics; and psychological aspects of communication. Graduate students also learn to evaluate and treat speech, language, and swallowing disorders and receive supervised clinical training in communication disorders.

Licensure and Certification

In 2009, 47 States regulated speech-language pathologists. Typical licensing requirements are a master's degree from an accredited college or university; a passing score on the national examination on speech-language pathology, offered through the Praxis Series of the Educational Testing Service; 300 to 375 hours of supervised clinical experience; and 9 months of postgraduate professional clinical experience.

Employment

Speech-language pathologists held about 119,300 jobs in 2008. About 48 percent were employed in educational services. Others were employed in hospitals; offices of other health practitioners, including speech-language pathologists; nursing care facilities; home healthcare services; individual and family services; outpatient care centers; and child day care centers. Nine percent of speech-language pathologists were self-employed in 2008. They contract to provide services in schools, offices of physicians, hospitals, or nursing care facilities, or work as consultants to industry.

For information on careers in speech-language pathology, a description of the CCC-SLP credential, and a listing of accredited graduate programs in speech-language pathology, contact: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852. Internet: <http://www.asha.org>

