

CAREER GUIDE FOR SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

SOC Code: 29-1127

Pay Band(s): 4 and 5 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Assess and treat persons with speech, language, voice, and fluency disorders. May select alternative communication systems and teach their use. May perform research related to speech and language problems.

Speech Language Pathologists positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Rehabilitative Therapies Career Group](#):

[Therapist II](#)
[Therapy Manager I](#)

While Speech Language Pathologists within the Commonwealth are all located within the Rehabilitative Therapies Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Health Care Compliance](#)
[Program Administration](#)
[General Administration](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Speech Language Pathologists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
2. Teaching others how to do something.
3. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
4. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision-making.
5. Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.
6. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
7. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
8. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
9. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
10. Actively looking for ways to help people.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Speech Language Pathologists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Knowledge of:

1. Principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
2. Information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
3. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
4. Principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.
5. Business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
6. Principles and procedures for personnel recruitment, selection, training, compensation and benefits, labor relations and negotiation, and personnel information systems.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Speech Language Pathologists commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Ability to:

1. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
2. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
4. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
5. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
6. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
7. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
8. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
9. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
10. Focus on a single source of sound in the presence of other distracting sounds.

Tasks

Note: The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Speech Language Pathologists. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.

1. Administer hearing or speech/language evaluations, tests, or examinations to patients to collect information on type and degree of impairments, using written and oral tests and special instruments.
2. Develop and implement treatment plans for problems such as stuttering, delayed language, swallowing disorders, and inappropriate pitch or harsh voice problems, based on own assessments and recommendations of physicians, psychologists, and social workers.
3. Develop speech exercise programs to reduce disabilities.
4. Evaluate hearing and speech/language test results and medical or background information to diagnose and plan treatment for speech, language, fluency, voice, and swallowing disorders.
5. Instruct clients in techniques for more effective communication, including sign language, lip reading, and voice improvement.
6. Monitor patients' progress and adjust treatments accordingly.
7. Record information on the initial evaluation, treatment, progress, and discharge of clients.
8. Refer clients to additional medical or educational services if needed.
9. Teach clients to control or strengthen tongue, jaw, face muscles, and breathing mechanisms.
10. Communicate with non-speaking students, using sign language or computer technology.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The occupation of Speech Language Pathologist is considered a **Social** occupation and frequently involves working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

This occupation is **Investigative** and frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

The Speech Language Pathologist occupation is a **Realistic** occupation and frequently involves work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often work with real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

It is nationally recognized that speech language pathology is a health field career and is regulated to ensure competent delivery of health care services to citizens. Therefore professional standards and competencies including certification and licensure are expected.

Licensure is required for Speech Language Pathologists positions in state government.

Also the Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is required along with a valid and state license in speech Language Pathology at the clinical level.

The Virginia Board of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology provides requirements for licensure and continuing competency for this occupation. Licensing information for Speech Language Pathologists can be found on the Department of Health Professions web site at <http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor, Bureau of Statistics provides the following information:

Speech-language pathologists, sometimes called speech therapists, assess, diagnose, treat, and help to prevent speech, language, cognitive, communication, voice, swallowing, fluency, and other related disorders.

Most speech-language pathologists provide direct clinical services to individuals with communication or swallowing disorders. In speech and language clinics, they may independently develop and carry out treatment programs. In medical facilities, they may work with physicians, social workers, psychologists, and other therapists. Speech-language pathologists in schools develop individual or group programs, counsel parents, and may assist teachers with classroom activities.

Speech-language pathologists keep records on the initial evaluation, progress, and discharge of clients. This helps pinpoint problems, tracks client progress, and justifies the cost of treatment when applying for reimbursement. They counsel individuals and their families concerning communication disorders and how to cope with the stress and misunderstanding that often accompany them. They also work with family members to recognize and change behavior patterns that impede communication and treatment and show them communication-enhancing techniques to use at home.

Some speech-language pathologists conduct research on how people communicate. Others design and develop equipment or techniques for diagnosing and treating speech problems.

States that regulate licensing, almost all require a master's degree or equivalent. A passing score on a national examination on speech-language pathology offered through the Praxis Series of the Educational Testing Service is needed, as well. Other requirements are 300 to 375 hours of supervised clinical experience and 9 months of postgraduate professional clinical experience. Many States have continuing education requirements for licensure renewal.

Several colleges and universities offer graduate programs in speech-language pathology. Courses cover anatomy and physiology of the areas of the body involved in speech, language, swallowing, and hearing; the development of normal speech, language, swallowing, and hearing; the nature of disorders; acoustics; and psychological aspects of communication. Graduate students also learn to evaluate and treat speech, language, swallowing, and hearing disorders and receive supervised clinical training in communication disorders.

Speech-language pathologists should be able to effectively communicate diagnostic test results, diagnoses, and proposed treatment in a manner easily understood by their clients. They must be able to approach problems objectively and provide support to clients and their families. Because a client's progress may be slow, patience, compassion, and good listening skills are necessary.

Employers require graduation from an approved program of Speech, Hearing Science and Language Development, culminating in a minimum of a Master's Degree. Also the Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is required along with a valid and state license in speech Language Pathology at the clinical level.

In Virginia, in addition to graduating from an approved hearing science program, the Virginia Regulations Governing the Practice of Speech Language Pathology requires continuing course work. The classroom or educational experience is directly related to the clinical practice of Speech Language Pathology and approved or provided by one of the following organizations:

- The Speech-Language Hearing Association of Virginia or similar state speech-language hearing association of another state;
- The American Academy of Audiology Association;
- The American Speech-Language Hearing Association;
- The Accreditation Council on Continuing Medical Education of the American Medical Association-Category I Continuing Medical Education;
- Local, state or federal government agencies;
- Colleges and universities;
- International Association of Continuing Education and Training;
- Health care organizations accredited by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations; and
- A sponsor approved by the Virginia Board of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology.

The Virginia Area Health Education Centers Program lists the following Virginia Education Institutions that offer an educational program in speech/language pathology: Hampton University, Longwood College, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University and Radford University.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Speech/Language Pathologist**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
4	THERAPIST II

5	THERAPY MANAGER I

Sample Career Path

Therapist II

The Therapist II role provides a career track for speech-language pathologists who assess, treat, and help prevent speech, language, cognitive, communication, voice, swallowing, fluency, and other related disorders. This role is also for audiologists who identify, assess, and manage auditory, balance, and other neural systems. Both the speech-language pathologist and the audiologist are required to be licensed by the Virginia Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

Therapy Manager I

The Therapy Manager I role provides a career path for managers responsible for planning and directing speech and audiology diagnostic and therapy services. The Virginia Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology requires licensure of these employees.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>

Department of Health Professions

<http://www.dhp.state.virginia.us/>

Professional Organizations

American Academy of Audiology

<http://www.audiology.org/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

<http://www.asha.org/>

Speech-Language-Hearing Association of Virginia

<http://www.shav.org>