

## Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP's) and Audiologists

### FACT SHEET

Of all the gifts bestowed upon humanity, the ability to communicate is one of the most important. Any impairment of this ability can have far-reaching consequences, affecting every aspect of a person's life, from learning, to work, to interactions with family, friends, and the community. SLP's and Audiologists provide services to prevent, diagnose, evaluate, and treat communication disorders.

#### **What is Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology?**

Speech and Language disorders refer to problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function. These delays and disorders range from simple sound substitutions, the inability to understand or use language, or the ability to use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and feeding. Some causes of speech and language disorders include: hearing loss, neurological disorders, brain injury, mental retardation, drug abuse, and physical impairments such as cleft lip or palate and vocal abuse or misuse. Frequently, however, the cause is unknown. SLP's and Audiologists provide services to prevent, diagnose, evaluate, and treat communication disorders.

#### **Why should I become a Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist?**

Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology is one of the hottest professions in the country. Speech-language pathology positions are expected to grow by 23% from 2010-2020 and Audiology positions are expected to climb 37%. This profession is ranked among the top 30 out of 700 fastest growing occupations over the next decade.

#### **What is the job market? Can I find work?**

SLP's practice in hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, public schools, and private practices. Employment of SLP's and Audiologists is expected to grow rapidly because the growing population in older age groups is prone to medical conditions that result in hearing and speech problems. Medical advances have improved the survival rate of premature infants, trauma, and stroke victims, bringing the need for speech, language, and hearing assessment and treatment. It is estimated that communication disorders (including speech, language, and hearing disorders) affect one of every 10 people in the United States.

#### **How much money will I make as a Speech-Language Pathologist or Audiologist?**

ASHA recently reported a salary range of \$58,000 to \$88,750 annually for SLP's working in a health care setting. SLP's working in the academic setting averaged \$65,000 annually. The latest 2010 ASHA Audiology Survey reported a median calendar year salary of \$70,000 for audiologists.

## **What is required for training, qualifications and advancement opportunities in the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology fields?**

Most states require SLP's and Audiologists to pass a licensure certification exam before they can practice after graduating from an accredited Speech-Language Pathology and/or Audiology educational program. Each graduate must complete a Clinical Fellowship Year his or her first year of employment. This Fellowship requires a clinically competent certified mentor by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association who is available to advise and supervise therapy and diagnostic practices.

SLP's and Audiologists should have strong interpersonal skills to successfully educate patients and their families about the course treatments. They should also be compassionate and possess a desire to help patients/clients. SLP's and Audiologists are expected to continue professional development by participating in continuing education courses and workshops. A number of states require continuing education to maintain licensure.