Professional Shortages in Speech-Language Pathology

**Issue #1**: Personnel shortages for speech-language pathology positions persist across the country. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) an additional 25,400 will be needed to meet the demand by 2026. <http://www.projectionscentral.com/Projections/LongTerm>. ASHA’s School Survey 2016 54% of SLPs reported more job vacancies than job seekers: <https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/2016-Schools-Survey-SLP-Workforce.pdf>

**Explanation:**

· The scope of practice for speech-language pathology is broad. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) must be prepared to work in medical and educational settings with individuals across the life span who have developmental or acquired impairment in the areas of articulation, language, fluency, voice, and/or swallowing.

· The professional preparation to become certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is rigorous. The need for clinical practicum placements in varied settings, particularly medical placements, prohibits graduate programs from dramatically increasing their graduate student cohorts.

Challenges:

· The five universities in Minnesota with graduate programs in speech-language pathology have increased their graduate student admissions to supply more SLPs into the workforce, however, speech-language positions remain unfilled.

Solutions:

· Task forces to address the issue of shortages have been developed nationally through ASHA and locally through the Minnesota Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MNSHA) to bring together SLPs, institutes of higher education, and school administrators to strategize potential solutions.

ASHA is developing a national certification for SLPAs that will include a national examination to help create uniform standards across the country

· Online graduate-level programs in speech-language pathology have been developed at universities around the country, including at the University of South Dakota and a program at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. These allow individuals to complete their coursework via a distance-education model, thereby allowing them to engage in clinical practicum in their home town.

· Two totally online programs which specifically train Speech Language Pathology Assistants were developed at Alexandria Technical and Community College. A two semester Certificate program and the two-year Associate degree. These programs were designed to train individuals to serve as support personnel for SLPs. Upon entry into that program, applicants self-identify a school placement in which they would obtain their clinical practicum experience during their program. The program began in Fall 2013 and their first graduating class was in the Spring of 2015.