

TESTIMONY BY HEIDI DALEY, AUDIOLOGIST, KSHA PRESIDENT-ELECT
HOUSE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 17, 2005
HB 2285

It is proposed by the Kansas Speech Language Hearing Association (KSHA), on behalf of its licensed audiologist members that the need for duplicative licenses from two separate entities be re-evaluated. The goal is to maintain protections for consumers, while at the same time, reducing some of the costs and paperwork required of licensed audiologists and recognition of the audiology license. The KSHA is proposing an amendment to HB 2285, KSA 74-5814, that would allow licensed audiologists in Kansas to be eligible for the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners (KBHAE) License by virtue of the professional license in Audiology issued by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Health Occupations Credentialing.

“Audiologists are professionals engaged in autonomous practice to promote healthy hearing, communication competency, and quality of life for persons of all ages through the prevention, identification, assessment, and rehabilitation of hearing, auditory function, balance and other related systems. Their unique education and training provides them with the skills to assess and diagnose dysfunction in hearing, auditory function, balance and related disorders. The delivery of audiologic rehabilitation services includes not only the selecting, fitting, and dispensing of hearing aids and other hearing assistive devices, but also the assessment and follow-up services for persons with cochlear implants.”

Presently, audiologists must meet rigorous educational and testing requirements to be licensed to practice in Kansas. The educational requirement by Kansas statute requires a graduate degree in audiology (Master’s or Doctoral). This consists of approximately 45 hours of graduate level coursework in a variety of audiology courses, including hearing aids. In addition, a supervised clinical practicum of 375 hours with a minimum of 250 clock hours at the graduate level is required. An oral examination is taken at the end of the graduate program. The individual must also take a national examination in audiology, prior to obtaining a license. After fulfilling the requirements for the Master’s Degree, audiologists are required to complete a Clinical Fellowship Year, (CFY), which is comprised of nine months of supervised experience in professional employment, with on-site observations and other related monitoring activities. This fellowship is closely supervised and documented, and the Clinical Fellow is evaluated every 12 weeks of the 36 week program, and provided with feedback on progress. After the successful completion of the CFY, the individual is granted a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) from the American Speech Language Hearing Association (ASHA), which is a requirement for state licensure through the KDHE Health Occupations Credentialing. After the successful completion of the academic requirements and CFY, the individual is eligible to apply for a Kansas license in audiology. Once licensed, audiologists must meet continuing education requirements to maintain their license, which is renewed every two years, and includes a licensure fee.

In December 2005, the Masters level program will be phased out at WSU, and be replaced by the Doctor of Audiology (AuD), which will be the entry-level degree for clinical practice in audiology. The AuD program requires a minimum of 109 credit hours, 2000 hours of supervised clinical practicum and a full-time residency at a clinical site. Beginning Jan 1 2012, the AuD will be the entry level degree in all audiology programs, as mandated by ASHA.

Kansas' licensed audiologists must also hold a second license through the KBHAE, if they are engaged in the practice of fitting and dispensing hearing instruments. To hold the additional license, licensed audiologists must pay another license fee. KSHA recognizes that this license fee goes to support the activities of the KBHAE, and KSHA supports the continuation of an additional fee structure for licensed audiologists who also choose to engage in the practice of fitting and dispensing hearing instruments. In addition, Kansas licensed audiologists who engage in the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments must meet the continuing education requirements set forth by the KBHAE to continue this license.

SUMMARY:

KSHA proposes that language be added to KSA 74-5814 (p.8 line 15 of HB 2285) to read as follows: (a) The board shall issue a license to each applicant who 1) satisfactorily passes the examination **or 2) is currently licensed as an audiologist under K.S.A. 65-6501 et seq.**, who pays the license fee provided for in K.S.A. 74-5810a and amendments thereto and who submits documentation that calibration of the applicant's audiometric testing equipment has been tested and verified as accurate within the preceding two year period. The license shall be effective for one year.

Complaints against the licensed audiologist in the practice of audiology will be made to the KDHE. Disciplinary actions may result in the loss of the license to practice audiology.

Complaints regarding the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments against the licensed audiologist with the hearing instrument fitting and dispensing license will be made to the KBHAE. Disciplinary actions may result in the loss of the hearing instrument fitting and dispensing license.

Audiologists who have met the educational and testing requirements to obtain a Kansas license from KDHE to practice audiology will be eligible through reciprocity to fit and dispense hearing instruments upon payment of the applicable fee to the KBHAE.

There are currently 27 states where audiologists can dispense hearing instruments with a single audiology license. *Idaho is proposing a bill during the 2005 session.

The training required of individuals licensed to fit and dispense hearing instruments is vastly different from that required of individuals licensed in audiology. The qualifications for license applicants to fit and dispense hearing instruments as stated in 74-5811; a) Is 21 years of age or older; b) has graduated from an accredited high school or has a degree equivalent to graduation from an

accredited high school.

KSHA wishes to proceed forward, following the trend of other states, and move to a single license for audiology to include the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments.

The fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments is within the audiology scope of practice.

There would be no budget impact on the KBHAE.

Applicants who have reportedly failed the exam administered by the KBHAE should be judged by their quality of practice, and not solely by a test score, when they have met the competencies required to obtain an audiology license.

With the impending entry-level clinical Doctorate in Audiology (AuD) in 2007, KSHA maintains it is unreasonable to require licensed audiologists to take an additional exam, to obtain a license to fit and dispense hearing instruments, and therefore, propose reciprocity for individuals currently licensed in audiology.

I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

Source: American Speech Language Hearing Association. (2004). Scope of Practice in audiology. ASHA Supplement 24, pp. 27-35.

