



Louisiana Board of Examiners for **SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY & AUDIOLOGY**

MISSION STATEMENT: *We exist because the legislature declared that "in order to safeguard the public health, safety, and welfare, to protect the public from incompetent, unscrupulous, and unauthorized persons, and from unprofessional conduct by speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech-language pathology assistants, it is necessary to provide regulatory authority over persons offering speech-language pathology and audiology services to the public."*



New Website and Interactive Licensee Dashboard

The Board hopes that you have been able to explore our new and improved website and Licensee Dashboard! The website houses a new design and is more user-friendly for licensees, applicants, and consumers. Each applicant and licensee now has a personalized dashboard, which assists in tracking application status and staying up-to-date with your licensure. The Licensee Dashboard has an interactive continuing education section, which allows each licensee to upload and track continuing education certificates through their dashboard, if desired. The forms listed on your dashboard are specific to the license you hold. Receipts and proof of licensure are now easily accessible. During renewal periods, the Board offers a help desk for technical questions about logging into your account or using our site.

Other features you may notice are an improved calendar, enhanced search features, and easier access to locate an individual rule or law. Applications and complaints are now able to be submitted online or can also be mailed in. Annual School Reports for school coordinators are now available online as well.

Please check out our new website. We hope that you find it more user friendly!



After October 31st annually, the close of renewal, you can begin inputting your continuing education events as you attend or participate in them. Certificates are not required to be uploaded, unless an individual is being audited.

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VACANT- Medical Advisor

Jolie Jones,
Executive Director
Email: jjones@lbespa.org

Office Contact Information:

Towne Park Centre
37283 Swamp Road, Suite 3B
Prairieville, LA 70769
Phone: 225-313-6358
1-800-246-6050 (LA only)
Fax: 225-313-6991
Email: aud-slp@lbespa.org

IN THIS ISSUE:

NEW WEBSITE AND INTERACTIVE LICENSEE DASHBOARD | HELPFUL TIPS
2016 REVISIONS TO PRACTICE ACT | BOARD OFFICES RELOCATED
LBESPA MEDICAL ADVISOR RESIGNS

2016 REVISIONS TO PRACTICE ACT

In 1995 major revisions were made to the practice act. Since that time, LBESPA has made note of changes that would bring the law into conformity with the current scope of practice for audiology and speech-language pathology and at the same time continue to protect the consumers of audiology and speech-language pathology services in Louisiana. LBESPA drafted some major changes to the law, but because of a number of factors, was unable to enlist the assistance of a legislator who would undertake such a drastic revision of the current practice act.

LBESPA was fortunate that Senator Daniel Claitor from Baton Rouge agreed to put forth some of the changes. Senator Claitor originally authored Senate Bill 223, designed to require criminal background checks for new applicants and individuals who held lapsed licenses. It was to be a consumer protection measure that would include state and federal background checks with all costs to be borne by the applicant for licensure. Through the efforts of Ayn Stehr, registered lobbyist and attorney for LBESPA, Senator Claitor amended the legislation to include a doctoral degree as the entry level qualification for audiologists.

The rationale for the changes was presented to the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Speech-Language-Hearing Association (LSHA), Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists in Louisiana Schools (SPALS), and the Louisiana Academy of Audiology (LAA). All three professional associations wrote letters of support for the proposed revisions, and Board members testified before the Senate

Committee for Commerce and the House Health and Welfare Committee. The bill was debated on the Senate floor and on the House floor and passed through both chambers.

Information presented in support of criminal background checks focused heavily on the issue of consumer protection, and it was noted that background checks are mandated by many other health-care boards and in many of the settings in which audiologists and speech-language pathologists are employed. Unsolicited testimony was provided by an officer from the Louisiana State Police who indicated that his agency had reviewed the bill and determined the language to be “perfect”. It should be noted that it will be necessary for LBESPA to promulgate and adopt rules for the processing of criminal background checks, and it is anticipated that this will occur during 2017.

With respect to changing the educational qualifications for audiology licensure, it was reported to the Committee that Master’s programs in audiology no longer exist and that only doctoral programs in audiology are nationally accredited. Information was provided relative to the entry-level qualification of a clinical doctorate following a 4-year program beyond the bachelor’s degree, and committee members were informed that the doctoral programs at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston and the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans are the only two doctoral programs in Louisiana. Concerns were expressed regarding licensure of individuals holding a previously awarded Master’s degree

in audiology, and they were assured that a grandperson clause would allow these individuals to be licensed. They were also assured that the transition to a doctoral degree in audiology has not resulted in a shortage of audiology practitioners in Louisiana.

The legislative changes were signed into law by the Governor, and audiologists and speech-language pathologists in Louisiana are now governed by Act 478. Although both changes became law August 1, 2016, only the doctoral degree in audiology is now in place. As was previously mentioned, rules and regulations governing criminal background checks will be developed prior to that provision being employed as a condition for licensure. A number of other changes are being proposed for the 2017 legislative session, and LBESPA is actively seeking a sponsor for those revisions.

LBESPA extends its gratitude to those individuals who supported the 2016 revisions and hopes that the proposed 2017 proposed changes will garner the support of many licensed audiologists and speech-language pathologists in Louisiana. Please review the changes on the LBESPA web site to provide your input and to have your questions answered. It is only through the efforts of our dedicated audiology and speech-language pathology professionals that we can continue to protect the consumers of our services.

BOARD OFFICE RELOCATED!

As many of you know, the Board office relocated to Prairieville in May. The Board office continues to maintain office space with the Louisiana Board of Examiners in Dietetics and Nutrition (LBEDN). We are now located in the Towne Park Centre on Swamp Road in Prairieville. Our phone number has changed to (225) 313-6358, although our 800 number and email remains the same. Please feel free to stop by our new location.



LBESPA MEDICAL ADVISOR RESIGNS

It is with regret that LBESPA announces the resignation of its medical advisor, Dr. Anita Jeyakamur. Dr. Jeyakamur, an otolaryngologist in New Orleans, served as the medical advisor for the past two years. She resigned her position with LBESPA to accept employment out-of-state. LBESPA is grateful to Dr. Jeyakamur for her counsel relative to medical issues and for her respect of the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology.

Thank You



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OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION:

Towne Park Centre

37283 Swamp Road, Suite 3B

Prairieville, LA 70769

Phone: 225-313-6358 • 1-800-246-6050 (LA only)

Fax: 225-313-6991 • Email: aud-slp@lbespa.org

WWW.LBESPA.ORG