

September 11, 2006

Paulajo Gaines, Director
Office of Educator Quality and Certification
Department of Education
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903-3400

Dear Director Gaines:

As the Executive Director of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for over 123,000 audiologists and speech-language pathologists – and native Rhode Islander - I would like to acknowledge and commend the recent actions taken by the Rhode Island General Assembly in providing a salary supplement to school speech-language pathologists who hold the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. This is an important acknowledgement of the work these professionals engage in to deliver quality services to the children of Rhode Island.

In reviewing a copy of the recent memo from your office indicating the documentation that needed to be submitted in order to qualify for the supplement, some of our members brought to our attention issues that might not be addressed by submission of a copy of the original Certificate of Clinical Competence. I would like to offer a suggestion that might assist you in determining eligibility for the supplement. This is a process we have used successfully with state licensure boards and with other departments of education where a stipend or supplement is involved.

Each year ASHA, through the Council For Clinical Certification (CFCC), certifies upwards of 6,000 individuals nationally in both speech-language pathology and audiology. Upon notification that certification has been granted, individuals have the option of ordering and receiving the actual paper certificate. This certificate, produced by an outside vendor, looks very much like a college or university diploma – it bears the name of the certificate holder, the area of certification, the signature of the president of ASHA when certification was awarded, and the date certification was awarded. Like a university diploma, there is no “valid through” date appearing on the document. But certification, unlike the college degree acknowledged by a diploma, is something that can and sometimes does expire. ASHA certification must be renewed annually through payment of fees and, every three years, through participation in continuing professional development activities. Individuals who do not meet these continuing requirements, are no longer considered certified and the certificate becomes invalid.

Since we understand that you wish to provide the salary supplement only to those individuals who are truly eligible, it may be that rather than requesting a copy of the original Certificate of Clinical Competence, a letter verifying current certification would be more effective. This letter, printed on ASHA letterhead, would provide the following

information: (1) the name of the certificate holder; (2) the date certification was awarded; (3) the date the certification is valid through; (4) the area of certification; (5) the ASHA account number for the individual in case you needed to verify the authenticity of this letter; and (6) the signature of the ASHA National Office staff member producing the letter. The letter could be sent to the individual school speech-language pathologist to submit to the appropriate party in your office or, if you provide us with a mailing address, the letter could be sent directly to your office. I am enclosing a copy of the type of letter that could be provided to you.

I know how pleased ASHA-certified school based speech-language pathologists in Rhode Island are to receive this recognition and I also know how proud they are to be acknowledged by the state as the professionals they truly are. I would be happy to discuss this with you so that your employees, and our certified members, are able to meet your October 1, 2006 deadline for submitting appropriate documentation.

Sincerely,

Arlene Arrigan Pietranton, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Enclosure