



To District Boards of Education

It has come to the attention of the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NJSHA), the professional organization that represents speech-language pathologists (SLPs) throughout the state, that speech-language therapy in the schools is among the services currently being considered for privatization. Consequently, NJSHA would like to address some of the complex issues related to the outsourcing of these services.

SLSs who are employed intrinsically within a school district are contributing members of that school community. They serve on various school committees, participate in parent-teacher functions, and provide support for many classroom activities. Their employment helps to ensure continuity of instruction, and their knowledge of curriculum, state guidelines, and the special education code ensures the educational relevance of the speech-language program.

Districts must be cognizant of the many additional services regularly provided by district employed SLSs that enhance the educational experiences of students. These services ultimately save districts money because of the ongoing collaborative treatment that ensures provision of services in the least restrictive environment as required by state and federal regulations.

We recognize that in these difficult financial times districts may look to privatization to address budgetary exigencies. Prior to implementing such a decision, however, we urge Boards of Education to consider the following analysis. If a privately contracted speech-language specialist (SLS) were to charge a district \$80.00 per hour (a very conservative estimate) for a five hour day by the clock, it would cost the Board \$72,000 for the school year for direct therapy services. Although Boards of Education may not be paying benefits and social security, this estimate does not take into account any additional charges that would be billed for the indirect duties inherent in the SLS job description, including those mandated by state and federal regulations. It is important to note here that there have been districts in the state that experimented with privatizing their Child Study Team and/or SLSs (e.g., Lakewood, Denville). Because they found that it actually cost more money to privatize in their situation, Denville ceased privatization attempts and resumed employment of in-district service providers. After a couple of years Lakewood did the same. For your review, attached is a detailed list of the ongoing responsibilities of SLSs who are members of the school staff. To perform these duties within mandated time limits, district employed SLSs often devote additional non-billable time (i.e., outside of the obligatory workday hours). Although some private contractors might have an all inclusive fee, such a fee would need to take into account the cost of these activities.

It is important for Boards of Education to provide speech-language services as a consistent and integrated part of the educational process to all eligible children. Consequently, please carefully consider the information presented here regarding school-based speech-language services provided to students and families when contemplating privatization.

NJSHA School Affairs Steering Committee

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Table 1. Brainstorm list of workload activities of school SLPs.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and engineer environments to increase opportunities for communication • Analyze demands of the curriculum and effects on students • Attend staff/faculty meetings • Attend student planning teams to solve specific problems • Attend teacher/service provider meetings (planning, progress monitoring, modifications to program) • Carry out assigned school duties (e.g., hall, lunch, bus, extracurricular) • Collect and report student performance data • Complete compliance paperwork • Communicate and coordinate with outside agencies • Complete daily logs of student services • Complete parent contact logs • Connect standards for the learner to the IEP • Consult with teachers to match student learning style and teaching style • Contribute to the development of IEPs, IFSPs • Coordinate with private, nonpublic school teachers and staff • Counsel students • Design and engage in pre-referral intervention activities • Design service plans • Design and implement transition evaluations and transition goals • Design/recommend adaptations to curriculum and delivery of instruction • Design/recommend modifications to the curriculum to benefit students with special needs • Design and program high, medium and low tech augmentative communication systems • Document services to students and other activities • Engage in special preparation to provide services to students (e.g., low incidence populations, research basis for intervention, best practices) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document third party billing activities • Evaluate students for eligibility for special education • Engage in dynamic assessment of students • Identify students with speech and language impairment • Implement IEPs and IFSPs • Interview teachers • Make referrals to other professionals • Monitor implementation of IEP modifications • Participate in parent/teacher conferences • Participate in activities designed to help prevent academic and literacy problems • Participate in professional association activities • Participate in professional development • Participate on school improvement teams • Participate on school or district committees • Plan and prepare lessons • Plan for student transitions • Provide staff development to school staff, parents, and others • Program and maintain assistive technology/augmentative communication systems (AT/AC) and equipment • Provide direct intervention to students using a continuum of service delivery options • Observe students in classrooms • Re-evaluate students • Screen students for suspected problems with communication, learning and literacy • Serve multiple schools and sites • Supervise paraprofessionals, teacher aides, interns, CFs • Train teachers and staff for AT/AC system use • Travel between buildings • Write funding reports for assistive technology and augmentative communication • Write periodic student progress reports • Write student evaluation reports |
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