

Workload/Caseload Document

- NJSHA's School Affairs Steering Committee created this workload/caseload position statement to promote effective programming, collaboration, and job satisfaction. The purpose is to lay a framework for addressing continuing concerns by Speech-Language Specialists (SLSs), pertaining to large workloads that hinder the ability to accomplish mandated requirements under the 2004 Re-authorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA-2004). This act dictates that (a) each student with a disability be provided a continuum of service options that will guarantee a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) based on the student's individual needs, and (b) special education and related services be linked to progress within the general education curriculum/least restrictive environment (LRE).

Caseload refers to the number of students receiving speech-language therapy/services. **Workload** refers to all required and performed activities of an SLS. In addition to the provision of speech-language therapy for students, there are additional workload services that are largely invisible. These may include:

- **including pre-evaluation conferences, report writing and annual reviews.** Time demands for case management, report writing, and collaborative planning with teachers and families to better understand the speech/language needs of students, as well as consulting with classroom teachers on areas within the SLS's scope of practice including disorders of speech and language, hearing loss, auditory processing, autism, language and literacy.
- Increased growth and severity of students with special needs in public schools including increased numbers of babies with significant medical complications who are surviving, thereby affecting the number of students in special education. Furthermore, students with multiple impairments and increased delays often require greater intensity of services.
- Time required to seek training to provide appropriate therapy/services to students, as school district in-service programs are rarely geared towards speech-language related topics,
- Keeping current on new technologies (sound-field systems, digital hearing aids, cochlear implants, augmentative communication systems), new information on rare disabilities, medical advances, and data on best practice (i.e. evidence-based).
- Management time for maintenance of sound-field systems, hearing aids, cochlear implants and augmentative communication systems, and for conducting school-based in-service programs for families and staff on instructional programs and technologies.
- Extra time for the SLS's role as a service provider and child study team (CST) member covering responsibilities such as case management of students classified Eligible for Speech-Language Services (ESLS)

- Time for clerical responsibilities including logging caseload data for the state and federal government, Medicare and scheduling and conducting conferences to discuss progress throughout the year at the request of the parent or the CST.
- Attending CST evaluation planning and other meetings, collaborating with CST members to determine eligibility, answering parent questions or troubleshooting a variety of issues.
- Time for travel between speech/language sessions and schools
- Administrative and local collective bargaining agreement requirements and support (i.e. bus or lunch duty)
- Intervention and Referral Service (I & RS) and/or Response To Intervention (RTI) meetings

CATEGORIES FOR WORKLOAD ANALYSIS

I. Student Services:

- a. Speech-language therapy/services
- b. Observation
- c. Speech-language assessment in and out of district
- d. Early Intervening Services/Response to Intervention (RTI)

II. Professional Services:

- a. Preparation for lessons to appropriately implement speech-language therapy/services to students
- b. Record keeping - logs, plan books, attendance, progress reports, all mandated forms
- c. Analysis of treatment (evidence based data)
- d. Consultation/Collaboration (parents, teachers, committees and/or school or other outside agencies, related service professionals)
- e. Meetings related to speech/language services (pre-planning, initial eligibility, annual review, continued eligibility, declassification, transition)
- f. Case Management of students with an apportioned amount of time according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.2 (c) 3.
- g. Research (current field knowledge, professional and program development, technology, sound-field systems, augmentative devices, up-to-date tests, locating evidence-based practices)
- h. Current federal and state mandates (IDEA, NCLB) which have resulted in increased paperwork, pre-referral, use of evidence based practice and literacy activities
- i. Report writing including scoring and analysis of information
- j. Designing/adapting materials to meet individual needs (communication systems, high interest /appropriate level)

III. Other Factors Impacting Workload:

- a. Administrative and local collective bargaining agreement (duty, meetings, open houses, lunch/prep)
- b. Participation on school committees

- c. Shortage of appropriately certified SLSs and Speech Correctionists
- d. Work space
- e. Access to technology

*Please refer to the ASHA document (**A Workload Analysis Approach for Establishing Speech-Language Caseload Standards in the Schools**) for appropriate implementation of a workload model.¹

It is important to read and understand federal and state mandates. Through knowledge of these regulations, SLSs can continue to be the best advocates for students by advocating for appropriate time to do their jobs! Consider a continuum of service delivery models. SLSs can continue to advocate for group size appropriate to student needs (smaller groups are known to be more engaging and to yield increased program performance, equated with better student outcomes.² They allow for effective and appropriate provision of services).

There are advantages and rewards in viewing the job of an SLS using a workload model including more effective programming, collaboration, job satisfaction/retention and most important achievement of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students!

¹ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, A Workload Analysis Approach for Establishing Speech-Language Caseload Standards in the Schools, Rockville, MD, 2002b.

² American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, (2000), National Data Report 1999-2000: National Outcomes Measurement System, Rockville, MD