



**Pursuing a Degree as an SLP: The Three Most Popular Fields for Speech Language
Pathologists to Enter After College**

Prepared for: Senior Students in the Speech Hearing and Learning Services Clinic

Prepared by: Emily Friel, Morgan Lent, and Kayla Paolillo

December 3, 2021

Letter of Authorization

October 3, 2021

CSD Career Builders
123 Main St
Farmville, VA 23901

Dear CSD Career Builders:

Subject: Flyer for Communication Sciences and Disorders Students

Speech-language pathology is one of the fastest-growing professions in the United States. With its diverse opportunities for these therapists to work, a growing number of students are entering this field of work after graduation. Since such a large number of people are entering this profession that comes with anxiety and confusion on where the best place is to work. In response, we want to ease this stress for students and create a program that will in depth describe the different areas of work speech language pathologists.

As we discussed with you last month, we would like to commission your company to research and evaluate the three most popular domains of work for speech language pathologists to work. This information will then be condensed and placed in an easy-to-read flyer for graduating students about to enter the workforce. This flyer will ease their stress about the future and prepare them for where they are interested in working.

We would like to have this flyer ready by January 1. To have this ready to hand out to students we need to receive this from your company by December 20.

We look forward to receiving this information. If you have any questions please reach out to us at our Speech Hearing and Learning Services Clinic. Our number is (434)-123-4567.

Yours Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Jane Smith
Director of SHLS Clinic

Letter of Transmittal

December 15, 2021

CSD Career Builders
123 First Ave
Farmville, VA 23901

Dear Ms. Smith:

Subject: Flyer for Communication Science and Disorders Students' Completed

Here is the report evaluating the most popular speech language pathologist fields of work to enter after graduation. This report was requested in a letter on October 3.

We have found the top three most popular fields of work for speech language pathologists, this information is below in an organized manner:

- School setting, published by Speech Language Pathology Graduate Programs
- Healthcare field, published by the American Speech Hearing Association (ASHA)
- Private Practice, published by Speech Language Pathology Graduate Programs

We are confident that these three domains are the most popular to enter after graduation. This will be helpful for apprehensive students trying to figure out the best place to work.

We have enjoyed working on this report. We would like to thank Emily Friel, Morgan Lent, and Kayla Paolillo for taking the lead on this project. If you have any questions or comments about this work, please let us know and we would be happy to meet with you. Our number is (804)-123-4567.

Yours Sincerely,
CSD Career Builders

Enclosure: Flyer for Communication Science and Disorder students'

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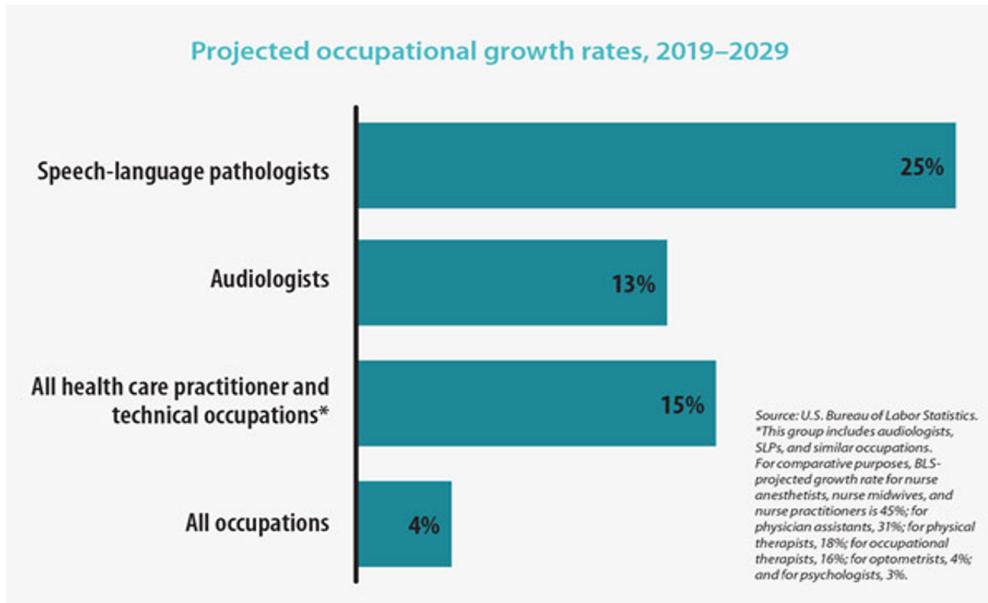


Figure 1

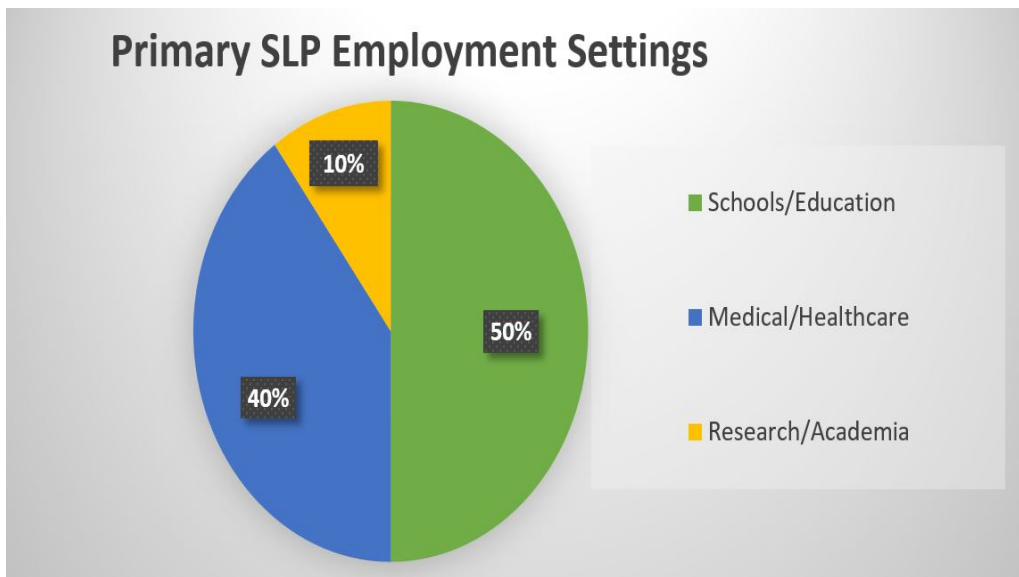


Figure 2

Executive Summary

As seen in Figure 1, the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics expects a 25% increase of Speech Pathologists in the next ten years. With this statistic showing how great of a profession speech pathology is, there has been a steady increase of students entering the Communication Science Program at Longwood University.

With the increase of students participating in the program, this comes with a larger amount of students researching where they will want to work after school. With this research comes to stress about which profession may be best suited for them. Jane Smith, the director of the SHLS Clinic at Longwood University saw this stress in her students and decided to hire CSD Career Builders to research and create a flyer that details the top 3 professions of speech language pathology.

CSD Career Builders' task was to research the different job domains for speech language pathologists and compile a list of the top three most popular careers for speech therapists.

The researchers found that the top three job areas to go into were the following:

- School Setting: work with children, work in a school, follow a school 9-month calendar year
- Healthcare Setting: work in hospitals or clinics, work with a variety of healthcare workers, opportunities for working with all ages
- Private Practice Setting: flexible schedule, a licensed business, able to make more money by choosing the amount of clients to work with

We are confident that our analysis and recommendations will ease the stress that students may endure when thinking about the profession they are interested in working in after college.

Introduction

Speech language pathologists work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, and swallowing disorders (ASHA, 2021). With all of these different domains to work under, there is an array of jobs that speech pathologists are able to work at. Since there are so many options on places to work this can bring stress and anxiety for graduating students on where the best place for a successful future is. Some places SLPs can work include: public and private schools, hospitals, private practice, rehabilitation centers, preschools, and much more. Being that this profession has so many options on where to work, it can be a daunting task.

CSD Career Builders was asked by the Speech Hearing Learning Services Clinic at Longwood University to create a flyer for graduating students with the three most popular careers for speech language pathologists after graduation. This flyer will include information about each of these types of work, this will aid in decreasing anxious students unsure of where they want to work in the future.

This report will allow for students to find the perfect place of work for them after school. One advantage of being a speech pathologist is that there is a niche for every person. A flyer is a combative way to decrease apprehensiveness of what a future for a speech language pathologist will look like.

Analysis

Role of SLP in School Setting

1 in 12 of school-aged children exhibit signs of speech or swallowing disorders; a speech language pathologist serves a pivotal role in an academic setting. In order to obtain a position at a school, one must have earned a master's degree, as well as completed a supervised post graduate fellowship and national examination. Being that communication skills serve as the building blocks for academic success, an SLP has multiple responsibilities when working with students. First, preventative measures must be taken. Early intervention is absolutely necessary in order to prevent the onset of speech or language difficulties. If delays/difficulties are treated early on, individuals will be more likely to reach developmental milestones at the appropriate age. In order to intervene, an SLP must identify the signs of a disorder. An SLP will collaborate with other teachers and professionals to determine if a referral for an assessment, special program, or accommodation is necessary. There are many components to a referral, and the student's family will be heavily involved to ensure appropriate placement. In order to ensure accuracy, an SLP must observe the child in a classroom, collect data, and review any records with factors pertaining to communicative abilities. Screening is often necessary in order to refer a child for evaluation of a diagnosis. Screening measures include the utilization of interviews, interventions, checklists, and/or rubrics.

If screening and intervention measures are indicative of a difficulty or delay, a student will be referred for a formal assessment. The referral must be an official written document featuring the attempted measures taken and modifications made. An SLP is involved in creating the assessment, conducting meetings, performing vision and hearing screenings, acquiring

written guardian approval, and issuing documents and paperwork. The SLP then performs the assessment, which is a form of data collection. To ensure accuracy, the assessment must be non biased in terms of culture and language as well as age appropriate. A student's history must be taken into account; their developmental, medical, and familial history play a large role in linguistic ability. Many forms of assessments are completed. Primarily, checklists are implemented. Questionnaires and scales are produced as means of tangible evidence. Curriculum-based assessment is often utilized with involvement of an educator; such assessments feature classroom based activities to determine academic ability. Samples of assignments such as worksheets or projects done in class can be used in a portfolio assessment to further determine one's success. A student is often observed in the classroom, naturalistic observation is extremely effective. An SLP can even conduct a language sample from a casual conversation. Standardized tests are taken into account as well, they provide an impression of the child's abilities in comparison to their peers. Another form of assessment, dynamic assessment, is the evaluation of a student's performance prior to accommodations. Assessments should be indicative of an individual's understanding of the components of language. This includes phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

The assessments are then evaluated, meaning that the information is interpreted. An SLP evaluates a student's abilities, delays, strengths, and severity rating. Many factors must be considered upon evaluation, including cognitive abilities, age, processing abilities, attention, hearing loss, and cultural and linguistic diversity. When developmental milestones are achieved in order but at a slower rate than the student's peers, a delay is assumed. If variation is present based upon an individual's social or cultural factors, it is identified as a difference. The severity

of the delay or difference is placed on a scale and a rating is determined. Evaluation may also lead to a diagnosis of a disability, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or hearing loss.

An SLP may also be involved in the creation of an individualized education plan (IEP). The development of an IEP is only possible through teamwork involving the parents/guardians, and both a regular and special education teacher. IEPs will include the results of the evaluation, present level of performance, annual goals and objectives, supplementary aids, modifications, and the extent of special education and/or services.

Role of SLP in Healthcare Setting

Speech Language Pathologists can also be found in the healthcare field. Healthcare has a large realm of areas that SLPs can work under. While there are a multitude of healthcare options for speech language pathologists, there are also many different settings they can work in. Some of these settings include long-term acute care, outpatient clinics, and pediatric hospitals.

Each of these settings can be vastly different and require different types of training, however, the schooling and certifications are generally the same. SLPs are required to obtain a master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders, complete a clinical fellowship year where they are mentored by a fellow speech language pathologist and have them as a resource for their first year, and then they must also complete the board certification in order to be able to practice. These are all strict guidelines and without them this would result in an SLP being unable to work with patients.

The first domain I am going to highlight is acute care. There are two kinds of this care, long-term and short-term. Long-term acute care (where SLPs are usually placed) is described as facilities that specialize in treatment of patients with serious medical conditions that require

ongoing care but do not require intensive care. The types of patients that are usually in long-term acute care include those that have a ventilator, ongoing dialysis, intensive respiratory care, and other conditions. SLPs can provide a variety of services to individuals in these facilities. Some of these services include swallowing, alternative and augmentative communication, and educating family members on ways to optimize communication in the future.

The next area of healthcare is outpatient clinics. Outpatient clinics are very diverse and offer many services. In these clinics SLPs can work with a variety of other healthcare workers such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, as well as others. The primary medical diagnoses of patients seen in outpatient clinics includes cerebrovascular accidents (which is usually a traumatic brain injury), head injuries, and respiratory diseases. Outpatient clinics are different from other healthcare facilities because they work together with other domains to implement the best care for their patients.

The last area of healthcare that will be discussed is pediatric hospitals. This is the treatment and evaluation of patients under 18 years old. The common disorders that are addressed by SLPs in this domain are apraxia, autism, language disorders, articulation disorders, central auditory processing disorders, and much more. The major difference between this field and the two fields previously discussed is that these are children being treated instead of adults and the elderly. Since children are developing so much during this age range, collaboration with other disciplines is imperative in order to make sure the child is receiving the absolute best care.

Speech language pathologists play a vital role in the healthcare field. The stigma around SLPs is that they help Kindergartners learn to say letters when in reality they do so much more and work with all ages and disorders.

Role of SLP in Private Practice

SLPs cover swallowing and communication disorders across the life-span. This includes things such as feeding behaviors, speech production and fluency, cognition, language, as well as voice, resonance, and hearing functions. While school settings and healthcare settings provide SLPs with a more specific age range of clientele, SLPs who work in private practices see a wide variety of patients. SLPs in private practices also are often able to pick and choose when and where they want to see their patients which gives them a little bit more flexibility when it comes to appointments.

A private practice is a licensed business. According to ASHA this means that these SLPs will not only need the information from graduate school and the licensing tests they take to become an SLP, but they will also need to be able to have knowledge about marketing and developing referral sources, licensing and tax laws, regulatory compliance, billing, and management. This means that the SLP is responsible for their own success and ultimately their salary. This can create some risk as no one is there to guarantee clients or ensure a specific pay rate, but it also allows an individual to be their own boss. Some of these individuals who own private practices make even more money than SLPs in other settings.

Some SLPs work for other individuals who own private practices and some choose to own their own private practice. Working for another SLP gives the individual less freedom to do what they want, but it also gives them better job security and less business responsibilities. If someone chooses to have other people employed for them at their private practice such as hiring a receptionist and/or other SLPs, they will have to keep track of those individuals salaries and clients as well. This can create a lot of stress but it can also develop a sense of a team and can make for a very successful business overtime.

Another responsibility that accompanies private practices are billing and reimbursement practices, legal matters, and industry trends. SLPs who work in private practices have to learn how to work with insurance companies to get paid in order to make more money than taking only clients who are self-pay. This means assessing what insurance companies have the most clients in the area of the practice as to not put effort into something that is not worth it. In addition, these SLPs have to be up-to-date on HIPAA policies just like SLPs in other settings in order to ensure the privacy of their patients. Lastly, SLPs in the private practice setting have to recognize industry trends in order to compete with other private practices. This may include things such as having the newest technology for therapy or offering services at competitive rates. In conclusion, individuals who work in private practices have a better chance at making their own schedules and having more freedom with who they want their clients to be. However, they also have many more responsibilities compared to SLPs in other settings. Half of their job is to complete services as an SLP and the other half is to run a successful business. This can create a lot of stress in the start of a business as it takes a lot of planning. It also takes a good amount of time to establish a client base which is why many individuals never choose to own their own practice due to fear of not obtaining clients. Hopefully, every SLP is able to pursue what they want to do despite their fears. It is wise for these individuals to start in other settings in order to first understand the profession and then take what they have learned and apply it to this specific setting.

Conclusions

Speech-language pathologists are found in a variety of locations. A lot of SLPs join this field due to the amount of different areas of work that can be found. CSD Career Builders found that the three most popular fields of Speech-language pathology are school settings, healthcare settings, and the private practice field.

Speech-language pathologists are essential in the linguistic success of an academic environment. In an environment full of developing students, it is pivotal that any signs of linguistic or communicative difficulty are addressed post haste. SLPS are trained to implement early intervention strategies, refer to and perform assessments, as well as execute hearing and vision screenings. SLPs will be of necessity in many areas; they may be involved in the classroom or work on a team of other academic professionals, specifically when creating an individualized education plan.

Speech Language Pathologists may work in the healthcare field. There are multiple areas where SLPs can work in this realm. Some of the locations that were highlighted were long-term acute care, outpatient clinics, and pediatric hospitals. Each of these locations are vastly different and have different domains of work. That is one of the advantages of being a speech language pathologist, there is a niche for every therapist.

Speech-language pathologists who work in a private practice setting have more flexibility in their schedule and they are able to see a wider variety of patients. In addition, these SLPs have to take on an additional role as a business owner and operator. This can make life more challenging as they must know how to run a business and follow certain protocols. However, it also provides them with the opportunity to make more money in the long-run as well as see patients when it is most convenient for them.

Recommendations

For the students pursuing graduate school in the future we recommend that they do the following:

- Implement opinions on the profession from a variety of speech language pathologists, ideally one from each of the fields listed above.
- Compare the salaries for each field.
- View specific examples of what a client would look like in each field.

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