



## Communication Sciences and Disorders

### **Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) Program Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is a Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA)?**

Speech-language pathology assistants are support personnel who, following academic coursework, fieldwork, and on-the-job training, perform tasks prescribed, directed, and supervised by ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists.

#### **What are some reasons people consider being an SLPA / completing the SLPA Certificate Program?**

- They are not planning on going to graduate school and have chosen SLPA as a career path.
- They would like clinical experience before pursuing graduate school.
- Graduate school is competitive and students like the option of working as an SLPA while waiting to get into a graduate program.
- The NAU Summer Track MS in Clinical Speech-Language Pathology requires applicants to work full-time as an SLPA during fall and spring semesters.

#### **How much do SLPAs get paid?**

SLPA salaries vary by state, city, and work setting. Recent data indicate that the average SLPA salary in Arizona is approximately \$21/hour across all settings. The average school-based SLPA salary reported in Arizona is approximately \$38,000/year. Internet sites can give you an idea of SLPA salaries and potential job openings in your area.

#### **Where do SLPAs work?**

SLPAs are primarily employed in schools and pediatric clinical settings (including home-based services). While the SLPA license allows SLPAs to work under the supervision of a SLPA in medical facilities, very few SLPAs are employed in this type of setting due to the lack of reimbursement for SLPA services by private insurance companies and Medicare. Those few SLPAs who do work in medical facilities are often limited to clerical and support duties rather than direct therapy.

## **Where do I get information about becoming a licensed SLPA?**

Go to your state's licensure/certification department website. NAU is an academic institution. We do not give advice on SLPA licensure due to the discrepancy between licensing requirements in the various states. You should consult with your state licensure or state certification department for required academic and fieldwork rules and regulations. Licensure information for Arizona is found on the Arizona Department of Health Services website: <http://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/special/index.php#speech-hearing-forms> Our SLPA certificate and/or BIS degree may or may not meet your state's expectations for licensure. It is your responsibility to determine if this program meets your individual needs.

## **I want to become licensed in California. What do I need to know about NAU's SLPA program and California SLPA licensure?**

California has established a list of "approved" SLPA programs. NAU is NOT one of these approved programs. However, NAU students seeking licensure in California may be eligible to obtain a SLPA license in California if they complete the BS degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders, complete the SLPA certificate courses, and take our CSD 460 fieldwork course as an elective. Licensure rules/regulations can change at any time. Be sure to check with the California Licensure Department to verify what is and is not required.

## **Can I get a job as an SLPA by only doing the NAU SLPA Certificate Program?**

No. The NAU SLPA Certificate Program is NOT a license to work nor is it certification to be gainfully employed. Each state has its own requirements for licensure/certification. NAU is an academic institution providing coursework that may or may not meet your state's requirements.

## **Do I have to complete a degree to get licensed as an SLPA?**

That depends on your state's rules/regulations. In Arizona, as long as you have the academic requirements (60 college credits with a minimum of 20 credits in SLP/SLPA coursework) and the 100 hours of clinical experience, you do not need a degree. However, in California, Oklahoma, and other states, you do need your bachelor's degree specializing in communication sciences and disorders.

## **Do I have to take *CSD 460: Clinical Interaction in Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology* to get SLPA licensure?**

It depends on your state's requirements for licensure. Observation and/or clinical experience needed for licensure or certification is determined by each state. Students seeking to become licensed in Arizona must complete 100 hours of supervised clinical experience. These 100 hours may be earned on your own without registering for the CSD 460 course. However, other states (e.g. California) require the completion of a BS degree with a clinical practicum "class". You will need to verify the requirements of the state where you hope to become licensed.

## What is the difference between “observation” and “clinical experience / interaction / fieldwork”?

Observation is watching what an SLP does during a therapy/evaluation session and does NOT include clinical interaction/experience. Some of the BS and SLPA courses have an observation component. However, these observations do not meet the criteria for clinical practicum toward a license. Clinical interaction/experience is working in the role of the SLPA. This includes all activities within the SLPA scope of practice (treatment, data collection, etc.) under the supervision of an SLP. This is done prior to being licensed. States have different rules, so be sure to research these requirements. Some states require a certain amount of observation AND clinical experience.

## Information on CSD 460: *Clinical Interaction in Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology*

- **States requiring CSD 460:** CSD 460 is required for SLPA licensure in California, Oklahoma, and some other states. It is not a required course for students planning to become licensed in Arizona. However, students planning to become licensed in Arizona are still required to obtain 100 clinical practicum hours, whether that is through the CSD 460 course or by making arrangements with clinical sites on their own. Please verify your state’s requirements for clinical practicum.
- **Terms offered:** CSD 460 is offered in the summer, fall, and spring semesters.
- **Enrollment:**
  - Students interested in enrolling in CSD 460 should contact the professor, Dr. Jeff Meeks ([jeffrey.meeks@nau.edu](mailto:jeffrey.meeks@nau.edu)), early!
  - Contact the professor at least a full semester prior to your anticipated enrollment (beginning of spring if taking CSD 460 in the summer, etc.).
  - Affiliation agreements can take months to get in place. This is especially true for school districts where agreements must often go before the school board for approval. Additionally, fingerprints in Arizona can take months as well.
- **Requirements to receive permission to enroll in the CSD 460 practicum course:**
  - **Prerequisites: CSD 191, CSD 202, and CSD 251, Pre- or Corequisites: CSD 301, CSD 302, CSD 303, and CSD 304 with grades of C or better.**
  - Arrange a clinical site (Dr. Meeks will work with the site to put paperwork in place with NAU.)
  - Submit the following as attachments to Dr. Meeks in **one email**:
    - IVP fingerprint clearance card (for students in Arizona)
    - immunization records
    - proof of HIPAA training (go to this page: <https://in.nau.edu/its/hipaa/> and submit a screen shot or other proof that you completed the 7 modules)
    - student liability insurance (There are multiple vendors. However, HPSO averages about \$40/year for student insurance: <http://www.hpso.com/individuals/professional-liability/student-malpractice-insurance-coverage-description> )
    - unofficial transcript showing completion/registration for prerequisite and co-requisite courses

- **Arranging a clinical site:**
  - You are responsible for finding your own clinical experience site(s) to complete your hours. However, **students seeking placement in the greater Flagstaff area MUST make arrangements directly through Dr. Meeks. DO NOT contact Flagstaff clinical sites on your own.** There are several sites we work with on a regular basis, and we **may** be able to assist you in placement. There is never a guarantee that a clinical placement will be possible in a given semester or location. We receive more requests for placement in the Flagstaff area than we have available supervisors so opportunities are limited. You may find that it is easier to arrange a site in another city for a summer placement or after you move out of Flagstaff. For more information, email Dr. Jeff Meeks ([jeffrey.meeks@nau.edu](mailto:jeffrey.meeks@nau.edu))
  - Finding a clinical site is similar to applying for a job. Be prepared to submit a resume including a list of courses completed in the BS/SLPA programs. Remember, the SLP is trusting you with the care of their clients/students and an interview to determine if you are a good fit is not unreasonable.
  - To find a site where you could potentially train/work, contact your preferred location, explain you are seeking a clinical site to complete your 100 hours of practicum for licensure, and ask the SLP if he/she will supervise your clinical interaction hours. Most SLPs would like a full-day commitment, once a week, as well as a commitment that you will fulfill hours across an entire semester even if you reach your 100 hours early.
- **Travel:** Travel may be required to and from your site as well as between sites (e.g. school campuses, client homes, etc.). You are responsible for your own transportation and associated expenses.
- **Course sequence:** It is recommended that you take CSD 460 after you have taken the other SLPA courses. This will provide you with the strongest foundation possible for your clinical experience and give you the best opportunity to benefit most from the experience. Some students have chosen to complete all of their degree requirements and then return to their city of permanent residence to complete CSD 460 over the summer, etc. This has worked out well for those students who have taken this approach. Dr. Meeks can advise you on course sequence and the logistics of taking CSD 460.