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ADVOCACY UPDATE

Licensing Board Meeting

*On August 15, 2023, CSHA Board Chair, **Marcella Cardoza McCollum**, met with **Paul Sanchez** and **Cherise Burns** of the **DCA Speech-Language Pathology Audiology, and Hearing Aid Dispensers Licensing Board**, and CSHA's lobbyists, **Andrea Ball** and **Laura Wasco**, to discuss questions and concerns of SLPs around the state.*

The following is a condensed summary of the discussion we had, and the answers to many of your questions. This is the beginning of a plan for ongoing communication between CSHA and the Licensing Board, and a great partnership between the two organizations committed to providing our California community excellent speech, language, and swallowing services, and supporting speech-language pathologists to be able to provide services at the highest level.

What is the current holdup with processing licenses?

Paul Sanchez and the licensing board decided (5 years ago) that in order to streamline licensing paperwork, an online application system made the most sense. However, the board had to rely on limited staffing to develop the system and implement it. So, while the program was launched during a relative 'downtime' (fall 2022), it is an ongoing and iterative process that continues through this year. This has resulted in an extraordinarily high workload for the few staff at DCA, and delayed applications.

Why move to the online system?

The online system will reduce errors and speed up the application process time when it is fully implemented.

Normally it is really hectic toward the end of June as everyone is graduating and applying for the RPE. Simultaneously, all the RPEs from the previous year are finishing up and ready to become permanent or full, licensed speech pathologists and are all applying for permanent licensure. This year was longer with the added work of transitioning to online applications, combined with mixed applications (some people applying online and some on paper).

The good news is that it is starting to pick up and current processing times are shorter than at the beginning of the summer. SLPs can look at updated processing times here:

<https://speechandhearing.ca.gov/applicants/slp.shtml>

Please note that if anyone submits an incomplete packet, the processing times are much longer, so be sure to have all the documentation and correct supervisory contacts before submitting your online application. All of this information is visible by clicking the link above.

How many analysts are working on applications?

Currently there are four analyst positions who handle licensing and examinations (currently one of those positions is vacant), but the licensing board has successfully lobbied to add another position which will help reduce the workload overall and reduce processing times. The licensing board hopes to be fully staffed in the next few months (governmental positions take time to be able to post, hire, and fill). In the meantime, the board lost one analyst to a promotion to another DCA board at the beginning of June and will be losing another analyst to retirement, so they will be filling those positions as well.

In the past, people were told to submit their application and cross fingers it was all received. With the online process, how often and at what stages will candidates receive information from applicants?

Now, candidates will be emailed at multiple steps, including:

- *When supervisors have filled out a form*
- *When training program director/clinical director has filled out a form*
- *When candidates verify that they have reviewed their application form and are submitting a their signed application*
- *When the licensing board verifies that the application is complete*
- *After 'requirements review'*
 - *Verification of education and supervisor requirements*
 - *Verification of fingerprints*
- *Verification of fingerprints and absence of criminal convictions barring an applicant from licensure*
- *Moving onto Final Review*
- *License Processed*

What can we do to help reduce the timeline?

Submit the application online (paper applications are manually uploaded into the online system, taking more time). Please wait to contact the licensing board until after the processing timeline posted on the website, and look up your application in the application status look-up on the their website at https://www.speechandhearing.ca.gov/webapplications/apps/status_details/. As applications are reviewed, the requirements get fulfilled in the system and display as fulfilled, deficient, or are still pending review.

How can new graduates speed up the process when they are about to graduate?

About 75% of the 4,000 applications come to the board within the summer months. That influx is what slows the process down for everyone. Students should apply as soon as possible (before

you graduate). Once you have a supervisor, you can complete the RPE application process. Universities can submit the university recommendation form once the student is in their final semester (see here https://speechandhearing.ca.gov/forms_pubs/rpe_cpur.pdf) You can be approved with a future start date, which helps you skip some of the timing issues that happen when new grads wait until May or June to apply for licensing over the summer.

How can we be more informed on what changes are happening to regulations and any other things we all should know related to the licensing board?

Be sure your email is updated with the licensing board. Email speechandhearing@dca.ca.gov With the subject line: "Update My Email Address". The licensing board can start to send out emails to listservs that apply to each license type. Currently, the board has only about 14-15,000 emails for its 39,000 licensees, so the email method is an incomplete list. People can also subscribe for updates by clicking here:

<https://speechandhearing.ca.gov/webapplications/apps/subscribe/index.shtml>

In addition, CSHA will continue to hold these sessions regularly, and share much of this information via public means. The most complete information will be sent to CSHA members or those who participate in our call for questions.

Can I just circumvent this delay issue and use my credential to get my ASHA CCCs, then apply for reciprocity?

No. Business and Professions Code (BPC) Sections 2532.7 and 2532.8 since 2003 have required that experience that was completed in California after July 1, 2003, without holding a valid RPE temporary license, will not be approved for licensure, including for ASHA CCC applicants as that experience would have been accrued in violation of 2532.7.

Specific Issues

What if I am a supervisor and see an error on a form my candidate submitted?

First, try to edit the form. There is the capacity for supervisors to edit many sections of the form. Second, if the section you need to edit can't be modified, please reach out to the licensing board. It may need to be manually resubmitted. Issues like this require the supervisor to reach out directly to the board, and specify in the subject title that you have an error or problem that requires manual resubmission. Be sure in the body of the email that you are very specific with what is wrong and needs to be fixed.

What if I am an RPE and my license expires?

Even if the system says the license is valid, once the expiration date hits, RPEs can no longer practice until their license is approved. But... the board is seeing many RPEs submitting their application at 40 weeks of experience or longer. While spring break and holidays need to be accounted for, they encourage all RPEs to apply immediately upon completing 36 weeks of work. Especially with current delays (which will last into the fall at least), submit ASAP.

Why can't I renew early with this backlog?

The renewal system does allow for renewal at 90 days before your expiration date (hooray!), but as it is a computer, the system is limited to 90 days. You can look up your expiration date by clicking here: <https://search.dca.ca.gov/>

You should also be sent a renewal notice 90 days in advance of the expiration date. The fastest way to renew, and if there are no errors can renew within 24 hours, is to renew online here <https://payments.dca.ca.gov/speechAndHearing/>.

Can you prioritize in-state applicants over out of state applicants, especially with the influx of telepractice and people submitting from out of state?

By law, the board can only expedite military applications, military spouse applications, and asylum/refugee/special visa applications. Everyone else has to be in the same queue. The board doesn't currently have a large number of out of state applicants, the vast majority of applicants are from California.

What if I am currently supervising three RPEs and they are completing their time, and I will begin to supervise a new RPE in the fall? How can I submit the form since at the time I will have three people connected to my license?

There is no issue with this, as long as the previous RPEs are completing their 36 weeks before the new RPE will begin. Turn in the [RPE Verification Form](#) and the [Termination of Supervision](#) at the same time and they will be processed together.

Thank you to Paul Sanchez and Cherise Burns for making time to speak with CSHA. We look forward to future fruitful discussions!

To our readers: We thank you for your excellent questions and your advocacy for this profession. CSHA will continue to connect with the licensing board and continue to advocate for our consumers, students, and professionals. If you would like to follow the licensing board, you can attend online this Friday, August 25th, beginning at 10AM with audiology committee items, then continuing on to full board related items. Here is the agenda and connection information. https://speechandhearing.ca.gov/board_activity/meetings/agenda_20230825.pdf

Together we are stronger!