

MSLHA Newsletter

For all Maine speech, language, and hearing professionals



It's back!

Remember all those years ago when MSLHA put out a paper newsletter for all of its members? Well we are back, just in electronic form this time! To start, we'll be putting together a quarterly publication to update you on current issues, legislative news, upcoming events, and anything else that pertains to our fellow speech, language, and hearing professionals.

Take Care of Yourself, A Message From Our President

The onset of Covid-19 has added fuel to our already overwhelming profession. I do not need to tell you about all the stress it has caused most SLPs wherever they practice. My hope is that you are all taking time to take care of YOU. I am guilty as most of you are at leaving myself to last if at all. You will be a better SLP if you take care of you first instead of last. I liken it to the preflight talk when taking a trip. We are told to put the oxygen mask on ourselves, then on our child. You cannot help someone if you are gasping for air too. So here are some ideas to reduce stress. They are not my ideas, but I tweaked them a bit. I give the credit to Alyson Podesta at wellness@dailyuw.com:

1. Hydrate first: You know all the benefits of keeping hydrated.
2. Make a plan: Break all those looming tasks into manageable pieces.
3. Prioritize sleep: Try to set a firm bedtime during stressful times.
4. Focus on food: Proper nutrition is always a good idea.
5. Meditate: Meditation helps reduce stress.
6. Buddy Up: Call a friend for coffee and talk about your stress.
7. Surround yourself with support: Spend time with that friend who always makes you laugh.
8. Talk to yourself: Who can do that better than an SLP? Isn't it a sign of genius?
9. Unload and say NO!: Easier said than done, I know.
10. Cut yourself some slack: Part of self-care is self-esteem.

Try to incorporate these helpful hints into your daily life. I know I need to. Stay healthy.

Sue Shain
MSLHA President



Update on MSLHA's Annual Business Meeting and Elections

As you are aware, the Executive Council (EC) made the difficult decision to cancel our annual conference this year due to COVID-19. While we miss our in-person networking and learning, this change was made easier when the state of Maine announced that our annual license renewal in 2021 will not require CEUs and many of us benefited from ASHA's free learning pass in the spring for professional development. Because there is no conference being held, the EC met to decide how to proceed without our regular Annual Business Meeting. In these unprecedented circumstances, we voted to also cancel the meeting and elections. Our current Executive Council did not have many changes to address with our election, and we also had far less work load without a conference to plan. Therefore, we are proposing that the current EC group 'hold' our officer and committee chair positions over into 2021. We do have a vacancy in the Audiology Chair position which is filled by appointment (not elected). If anybody knows of a candidate for this role, please pass the information to Katie Thibodeau, our Membership Committee Chair. We are also always seeking additional committee members to help our work! In closing, the work of our Executive Council did not entirely get put on hold this year. This newsletter will inform the membership of updates and happenings in our state in the fields of speech pathology and audiology. We all look forward to getting back to normal business in 2021. Please go to our website (<http://mslha.memberclicks.net>) to contact any EC member if you have questions or concerns.

Margie Childs, MSLHA Secretary

License Requirement Changes Due to Covid-19

On April 7th, 2020, an Executive Order was signed by Governor Mills titled "An Order Suspending Enforcement of Provisions of Certain Licensing Statutes and Rules in Order to Facilitate Health Care and Veterinary Care During the State of Emergency Created by Covid-19." This promptly changed several requirements put forth by the Office of Professional and Occupational Regulation (OPOR) that directly impact health care providers including speech, language, and hearing professionals. These changes include but aren't limited to the following (as directly quoted from their official memorandum):

- Expands the availability of telehealth services: All OPOR licensed health care providers may provide telehealth services to their patients, as necessary and appropriate during the declared state of civil emergency. The Order expressly permits the use of telehealth by video, audio, or other electronic means. The Order does not expand any licensee's scope of practice.
- Alleviates the following licensing requirements for all health care providers licensed by OPOR: **Licensees whose licenses are scheduled to expire on or before March 20, 2021 may renew that license without satisfying any continuing education requirements that would otherwise apply.**

Please use this link for more information regarding these changes:

https://www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/speech_audiology_hearing_aid/index.html

Katie Thibodeau, Membership Committee

Licensing Board Changes to Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

A public hearing was held in August 2020 to consider proposed changes to Chapter 9 rules for speech-language pathology assistants. Substantial changes were made, requiring a second comment period. The Board considered new comments on October 5, 2020. Here are the major changes, if no further revisions were made at the October 5th meeting:

- Practicum requirements:
 - Requires completion of 95 hours of supervised practicum
 - Eliminates the requirement for adult practicum hours for SLP-As working with the pediatric population
 - Provides for the requirement for adult practicum hours for SLP-As working with the adult population
 - Amends the qualifications to allow an applicant to complete the practicum hours once licensed
- Supervision:
 - Allows the SLP-A to have more than one supervising SLP
 - Caps the number of SLP-As the SLP can supervise as up to 2 full-time/40 hours per week supervisees, or 4 part-time/20 hours per week supervisees
 - Removes the supervision percentages and allows for the SLP to "determine the frequency and nature of the supervision required by Section 3(1), direct or indirect, to be provided based on the clients' required level of care and the speech-language pathology assistant's caseload, experience and competency."
- Speech-Language Pathology Assistant Licensure:
 - SLP-A registration changes to licensure; currently registered SLP-As will be issued a license once the rules become effective
 - Licenses renew annually

Further information will be posted on Maineline, the MSLHA Facebook page, and the MSLHA website when it becomes available.

Karen Davis, Legislative Committee

An Update on Maine's Early Childhood Special Education Services (P.L. 2019, CH. 343)

The Independent Advisory Review Committee on Maine's Early Childhood Special Education Services has been meeting since September 2019. I, Kim Feeney, was nominated by MSLHA and then appointed by the Maine Legislature to represent SLPs and audiologists in the State of Maine to this Advisory Committee. The members of the Advisory Committee have completed the following:

- a) developed expectations to be fulfilled by an outside company to do an analysis of how a transition from CDS provision of services for children birth to 5 to the public schools might best occur;
- b) designed a rubric to rate the proposals from outside companies to determine the best fit for the task at hand;
- c) suggested the best company for the State of Maine and presented it to the Legislature's Education Committee; and
- d) met on a consistent basis to review the company's (PCG) progress towards the established timetables and suggested changes when applicable to their reports.

Currently, we are reviewing their Phase I report before it is presented to the Legislature's Education Committee members. I have had one interview with some of the company's members (PCG). They asked for information for cost analysis purposes regarding administration, funding, and service delivery as it pertains to speech/language/hearing services.

Phase II, in which the specifics of each model will be established, will soon begin. Members of the PCG Company are now looking for our organization to provide them with our concerns, from an SLP and audiologist's point of view, regarding the possible transition of children (birth to age 5) receiving speech/language/hearing services from CDS to the public school systems in Maine. This is a chance to have our voices heard when it comes to what the future might look like in Maine for servicing this population. PCG is looking for questions you may have, concerns, and ideas regarding a) if the State of Maine should continue with the CDS model or b) change to the public school model. PCG definitely wants to know if we as an organization are leaning toward one particular model.

Please forward your input to me through email to palm73199tree@aol.com. I will take all the information and forward it to PCG. The deadline to get this information to PCG is November 1.

Kim Feeney, School Practice



BESPA Position Openings

The state of Maine's Board of Examiners on Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology and Hearing Aid Fitters & Dealers (BESPA) has two openings for speech-language pathologists!

According to its website, maine.gov, "these boards are administered by the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation. Licensing boards exist to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare through the regulation of various professions. Such protections are enforced through both the licensing of individuals who demonstrate a standard of competency in a regulated profession and also through licensure laws against fraudulent, incompetent and unethical practices. Each state licensing board is comprised primarily of members of the profession or occupation that it regulates."

For consideration for appointment to [personal boards](#), candidates should provide the following:

- Updated Resume
- [Application for Gubernatorial Appointment Form \(MS Word\)](#).
- [Tax Clearance](#)
- [Personal Release Form \(MS Word\)](#).
- [Conflict of Interest Form \(MS Word\)](#): (applying for a Licensing and Regulatory Board)

If you are interested in applying for this position, please send your application and other paperwork to Melissa O'Neal, Director, Boards and Commissions, Office of the Governor, #1 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333.

Meg Jackins, Clinical Practice Committee

Connecting with Other States During the Pandemic

Since March of this year, MSLHA leaders have worked hard to connect with other states during the global pandemic. One of the ways they have done so has been by attending the Council of State Association Presidents (CSAP) business meeting and virtual roundtable trainings. CSAP provides training and opportunities to interact and collaborate with both ASHA and other individuals in state president positions (elect, past, current and alumnae presidents). Some of their most recent roundtable discussions have included "Navigating Your State Association through COVID-19: Quandaries and Complications," "Conference Collaboration, Transition, and Transformation," and "Membership Recruitment and Retention: A Never-Ending Project." The Fall Virtual Conference in November will take place online and will focus on continued navigation through 2020 and beyond. Your presidents and the EC officers are dedicated to continuing to steer MSLHA forward during these unprecedented times.

Dr. Alice Smith, President-Elect and Clinical Practice Committee



Advocating for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists in Regard to Proposed Medicare Cuts

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has recently proposed cuts to Medicare Services, notably with Part B outpatient services, that will directly impact healthcare providers, including speech, language, and hearing professionals, who work in various medical settings. While these cuts were designed to offset payment increases for evaluation/management codes, SLPs and audiology professionals cannot bill these codes. As many in these settings know, several medically-based SLPs and audiologists have already taken pay cuts or have lost their jobs during this pandemic. If these proposed cuts go through, not only will this continue for our fellow professionals, but it will also further limit our services to many vulnerable populations.

Due to this, one of the members of the Executive Council reached out to her 2nd congressional district representative, Jared Golden, and Senator Susan Collins to voice these concerns. As of the date of this publication, Senator Collins responded in a letter stating that she "oppose[s] these cuts because of the threat they pose to patient access to health care in our State...For these reasons, on October 9th, 2020, I called on Senate leaders to put a stop to these payment cuts."

How can I help?

Click on the link below (provided by ASHA) to fill out an auto form to email our Maine congressional members. It also provides more information regarding these cuts.

<https://takeaction.asha.org/asha/app/write-a-letter?2&engagementId=506710>

How has ASHA helped advocate for us?

In August and September of this year, ASHA emailed members in their 60 Second Advocacy Updates with requests to sign a petition to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by October 1st. Read more about ASHA's efforts in changing these cuts in the following link:

<https://www.asha.org/News/2020/ASHA-Continues-to-Pressure-Congress-Administration-to-Stop-Medicare-Cuts/>

To sign up for ASHA Headlines emails (including the 60 Second Update) follow this link to instructions: <https://www.asha.org/publications/ASHA-Headlines/>

Jamy Parkhurst, Communications Committee

Dr. Alice Smith, President-Elect and Clinical Practice Committee

Katie Thibodeau, Membership Committee



Please Join Us! MSLHA is launching Clinical Conversations in Maine - a series of virtual opportunities to learn and network from the comfort of home.

Please join us for some fun “Clinical Conversations in Maine.” These will be 30-minute Zoom conversations with speech pathologists/audiologists talking informally about their work, how they got interested in their areas of expertise, and brief updates on management of patients with disorders in their areas. These will be non-CEU events, and you are encouraged to ask questions. Our first three participants will be Kenneth Tom, Ph.D. at 7pm Wednesday December 9, 2020, Phyllis Palmer, Ph.D. in late January (TBA), and John A. Nelson, Ph.D., in early March (TBA). Links and reminders will be sent on Maineline and Facebook.

Dr. Phyllis Palmer is Chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of New Mexico. She runs the Swallow and Voice Lab and does research focused primarily on sensory systems that regulate swallowing, the impact of diseases on swallow function, standards of care for dysphagia evaluation, and the efficacy of sensory treatment protocols.

Dr. John Nelson worked as Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Texas at Austin and has been Vice President for Global Audiology for a large hearing aid company for the past 16 years.

Please see the event below for more information about Dr. Kenneth Tom.

We would love to set up more conversations with any of you who have exciting ideas, experiences, or techniques that you would like to volunteer to share with MSLHA members. Just let us know!

Dr. Alice Smith, President-Elect and Clinical Practice Committee

Clinical Conversations in Maine with Kenneth Tom, Ph. D.

When

Wednesday, Dec. 9th, 7pm

Where

Zoom (link will be posted on Maineline and our FB page prior to Dec 9th)

More information

Please join the first edition of “Clinical Conversations in Maine” (see article above for more information about this new MSLHA feature). This event will be a 30-minute Zoom conversation with Kenneth Tom, Ph. D., an Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at California State University, Fullerton. Dr. Tom is also a certified yoga teacher and therapist and a trained manual therapist. His teaching and research focus on voice acoustics and physiology, voice disorders, and care of the professional voice. He integrates the tools of yoga, myofascial release, craniosacral therapy, acupuncture, and techniques adapted from theatre/singing voice training into his work in voice care/rehabilitation.

We will talk about his work, how he got interested in his areas of expertise, and any updates he has on the management of patients he focuses on. Again, these are non-CEU events, and you are encouraged to ask questions or just sit back and enjoy the conversation.





Contact Us

Email: mainespeechlanguagehearing@yahoo.com

Website: <http://mslha.memberclicks.net>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/maineslha>

