

**WSHA Board Gathering re: SLPAs—Summary**  
**3/6/04**

**Attendees:**

WSHA President Tina Eichstadt  
WSHA President-Elect Kathy Erdman  
WSHA Past President Caryn Easterling  
WSHA VP-Membership Pat Willis  
WSHA VP-Audiology Meredy Hase  
WSHA VP-Communications Linda Carpenter  
WSHA VP-School Services Kate Morand  
WSHA VP-Governmental Affairs Gary Cohen  
WSHA VP-Education Sue Berman  
WSHA Lobbyist Michelle Mettner  
Other Board members were absent due to trips or illness.

**Invitees:**

WSHA Member Sharon Bair (Meriter Hospital—SLPA on staff)  
WI DPI S/L Consultant Sheryl Squier  
WSHA Past President Alma Peters  
WSHA Member and NWTC SLPA Program Chair Lori Suddick

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**Purpose and Goal**—President Eichstadt explained the rationale for the meeting. WSHA was approached recently by DPI to offer feedback on the licensing of SLPAs as special education program aides under the DPI. Initially, an explanation was given to DPI regarding WSHA activities to date. It became clear that more discussion was needed in light of this DPI request and their forward movement to license SLPAs in some way for employment in school settings at the request of NWTC. Therefore, President Eichstadt asked Board members to gather face-to-face to discuss DPI's request for information and also have an opportunity to have the Board hear directly from special invitees as listed above. President Eichstadt noted that at this point, WSHA's role in this discussion was as a consultant who could provide history, education, and further clarification. WSHA wants to be involved in these discussions on behalf of our members.

**Sheryl Squier, WI DPI S/L Consultant** distributed two handouts for review: (1) a page from the DPI website re: frequently asked questions for Teacher Aides and Assistants; and (2) a 3-page document titled, "Special Education Program Aide License for Individuals Who Complete Training in a Two Year Associate Level Program for SLP-Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities in a School-Based Scope of Practice. Sheryl took some time to explain the documents and the history of how they came to be. She acknowledged that this was not an ideal solution for SLPAs trained under a two-year associate degree program and that they are trained to do more things than this license would allow them to do. She also pointed out that SLPAs could always have obtained this aide license—that it is nothing "new." When asked about the plan of DPI, Sheryl commented that sometime in the summer, she would start to talk with stakeholders about a more ideal plan for licensing and integrating SLPAs into school-based settings.

Sheryl's requests of WSHA:

- Participate as a part of the discussion and process
- Add information from WSHA members as it is gathered/requested

**Lori Suddick, NWTC Program Director** offered background on recent events which have led to this discussion of SLPAs licensure in the schools. Lori indicated that the ultimate goal for her work at NWTC is to have her graduates employable as support staff in all settings where fully-licensed SLPs work. Additionally, to protect both the SLP and the SLPA from scope of practice abuse or confusion and

ultimately to create solid consumer protection, full SLPA licensure under DPI is a goal. An important clarification is that licensure is not needed outside school settings because of the clear supervision guidelines under the DRL-licensed SLP. Lori admitted to some frustration for NWTC's four years of effort with little or no movement in Wisconsin. She has designed a class to train fully-licensed SLPs for SLPA supervision in any setting, and reports excellent outcomes both clinically and professionally for fully-licensed SLPs who have supervised the fieldwork of SLPAs in her program. Lori indicated that she is ready, willing, and able to begin a more focused initiative with DPI and WSHA to forward this effort on behalf of NWTC and SLPA students. Finally, Lori focused the Board's attention on the latest peer review documents that have been forwarded by ASHA regarding the training, use, and supervision of SLPAs. Those documents are posted on the WSHA website.

Lori's requests of WSHA:

- Help move AA level of education for assistants (clarify terms: assistants vs. aides)
- Educate fellow SLPs who may fear outcomes and/or lack information through panels, sessions, etc.
- Be a provider of CE for SLPAs (with a potentially unique membership category)
- Advocate on behalf of SLPAs with DPI

**WSHA Board members and other invitees** discussed both Sheryl's and Lori's comments and requests at length. Questions posed by the WSHA Board were central to the subsequent discussion:

- Do SLPs in the schools across WI need SLPAs to increase their success in school-based practice?
- Do they perceive this need (if it exists) collectively?
- What are the financial benefits of utilizing SLPAs from an administrator's perspective assuming that the number of students served by an SLP will not/cannot increase by hiring an SLPA (outside of IEP-driven aide funding)?
- Is DPI aware of the potential WI statute conflict with supervision requirements and responsibilities for those 820 licensed SLPs who also hold the DRL license?
- What is the process for an SLPA license should DPI pursue licensure, given the 820-licensed SLPs?
- Has DPI leadership spent time studying the DRL license language regarding unlicensed professionals as a potential guide for language regulating SLPA practice in the schools?

**Wrap-up**—President Eichstadt thanked all in attendance and facilitated a “next steps” discussion for the group. The following six items were outlined and consensus was achieved:

- Assemble an information packet for WSHA members regarding SLPAs
  - Create both a mailing and insert in the convention binders
    - Finish and distribute the DRL/DPI/ASHA comparison grid with respect to SLPAs
    - Focus on both professional protection/education and consumer protection
- Let the members know publicly what is happening
  - WSHA President speaks at the luncheon and at ASHA/WSHA Roundtable
- Communicate with DPI directly in response to their request
  - Recommend against allowing special education aide licensing for SLPAs
  - Alert to the potential WI statute conflict of supervision rules between two licenses
  - Offer ASHA Code of Ethics for fully-licensed SLP practice
  - Highlight/investigate analogous structure in PT and OT professions—rules for PTAs and COTAs
  - Learn more about the plan for influencing WEAC/other stakeholders and moving forward
- Support Lori's programs internally with WSHA members
  - May 2004 CE program regarding utilization and supervision
  - Encourage LSHSS committee and DPI staff to attend May presentation
  - Post program information on WSHA website and hold up as a model program for SLPA training
  - Invite Lori to LSHSS committee meetings
- Invite PT association leader to April WSHA Board meeting to discuss PT approach to assistant licensure

- Look to the WSHA LSHSS committee and others for leadership on this issue on behalf of the WSHA Board
  - Keep education and consensus-building at the forefront
  - Generate process and steps for action plan
  - Clarify what our school-based members need and want
  - Send the message about needed change and support change...nothing stays the same!