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**HOUSE BILL NO. 2040****AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**(Proposed by the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
on January 28, 2025)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Seibold)

A *BILL* to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 26 of Title 54.1 an article numbered 3, consisting of sections numbered 54.1-2620 through 54.1-2624, and to repeal § 54.1-2605 of the Code of Virginia, relating to speech-language pathology assistants; licensure, qualifications, scope of practice; revocation or suspension of license; continuing education.

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 26 of Title 54.1 an article numbered 3, consisting of sections numbered 54.1-2620 through 54.1-2624, as follows:**

*Article 3.**Licensure of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants.***§ 54.1-2620. License; application; qualifications of speech-language pathology assistants.**

A. No person shall practice as a speech-language pathology assistant unless he possesses a current, active, and valid license from the Board. The licensee shall have the right to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant in the Commonwealth for the period of his license as set by the Board, under the supervision and direction of a licensed speech-language pathologist.

B. An application for such license shall be made to the Board in writing and shall be accompanied by satisfactory proof that the applicant (i) has completed a Board-approved eligibility pathway option, described in subsection C, (ii) has completed a minimum of 100 hours of supervised clinical experience under the direct supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist, and (iii) has achieved a passing score on the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Assistants Certification Exam.

C. In order to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant, an applicant for licensure shall complete a Board-approved eligibility pathway that includes:

1. (i) Obtaining a two-year speech-language pathology assistant program degree from an accredited institution, (ii) completing the prerequisite courses required by subsection D, and (iii) completing the clinical field work required by subsection E;

2. (i) Obtaining a bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders from an accredited institution; (ii) completing (a) the online education modules offered by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association or (b) a program equivalent to the online education modules offered by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; (iii) completing the prerequisite courses required by subsection D; and (iv) completing the clinical field work required by subsection E; or

3. (i) Obtaining a bachelor's or associate's degree from an accredited institution; (ii) completing a speech-language pathology assistant program with equivalent course work, or completing academic course work from an accredited institution of higher education in the following areas: (a) introductory or overview course in communication disorders, (b) phonetics, (c) speech sound disorders, (d) language development, (e) language disorders, and (f) anatomy and physiology of speech and hearing mechanisms; (iii) completing the prerequisite courses required by subsection D; and (iv) completing the clinical field work required by subsection E.

D. In order to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant, an applicant for licensure shall complete three one-hour prerequisite courses from an approved professional development provider, academic clinical practicum program, or via employee training, on each of the following topics: (i) ethics, (ii) universal safety precautions, and (iii) patient confidentiality.

E. In order to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant, an applicant for licensure shall complete a minimum of 100 hours of clinical field work, including (i) 80 hours of direct patient/client/student services under the supervision of a certified speech-language pathologist and (ii) 20 hours of indirect patient/client/student services under the supervision of a certified speech-language pathologist. Such hours may be completed via an academic practicum or on the job under the supervision of a certified speech-language pathologist. Hours completed via an academic practicum or on the job shall be no more than five years old at the time of application for licensure. Observation, simulation, and graduate practicum hours shall not count toward such requirement.

F. The Board may grant a license to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant to an applicant licensed to practice in another jurisdiction if he (i) meets the requirements of subsection B; (ii) holds a current, unrestricted license to practice as a speech-language pathology assistant in another jurisdiction in the United States; (iii) has not committed any act that would constitute grounds for denial as set forth in § 54.1-2706; and (iv) meets other qualifications as determined in regulations promulgated by the Board.

**§ 54.1-2621. Scope of practice of speech-language pathology assistants.**

- 60 A. A licensed speech-language pathology assistant shall only engage in those duties that adhere to the  
61 code of ethics of the Board and are planned, designed, and supervised by a licensed speech-language  
62 pathologist, including:
- 63 1. Assisting with speech, language, and hearing screenings without clinical interpretation of results;
  - 64 2. Administering and scoring screenings for clinical interpretation by the supervising speech-language  
65 pathologist;
  - 66 3. Assisting with, but not administering or interpreting the results of, client assessments, including setting  
67 up the testing environment, gathering and preparing materials, and taking notes;
  - 68 4. Administering and scoring assessments and progress monitoring tools without clinical interpretation of  
69 results, if the licensed speech-language pathology assistant meets the examiner requirements for such tools  
70 and the supervising speech-language pathologist has verified that such examiner requirements have been  
71 met;
  - 72 5. Performing routine activities for therapy sessions in accordance with a plan developed and directed by  
73 the speech-language pathologist who retains the professional responsibility for such client, including (i)  
74 implementing documented care plans or protocols, (ii) providing direct therapy services to address treatment  
75 goals, (iii) adjusting and documenting the amount and type of support or scaffolding provided to the client in  
76 treatment to facilitate progress, and (iv) developing and implementing activities and materials for teaching  
77 and practice of skills to address the goals of the client;
  - 78 6. Providing treatment through a variety of service delivery models as directed by the supervising  
79 speech-language pathologist;
  - 80 7. Utilizing telecommunications technology to provide services remotely to clients as directed by the  
81 supervising speech-language pathologist;
  - 82 8. Documenting client performance and reporting such performance information to the supervising  
83 speech-language pathologist;
  - 84 9. Providing caregiver coaching, including modeling and teaching communication strategies and  
85 providing feedback regarding caregiver-client interactions for facilitation and carryover of skills;
  - 86 10. Sharing objective information regarding client performance without interpretation or  
87 recommendations as directed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;
  - 88 11. Assisting with programming augmentative and alternative communication devices and assisting and  
89 training clients with using such devices;
  - 90 12. Demonstrating strategies and assisting clients with skills included in the feeding and swallowing plan  
91 developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist;
  - 92 13. Signing or initialing informal treatment notes and, upon request, co-signing formal documents with  
93 the supervising speech-language pathologist;
  - 94 14. Assisting with clerical duties and site operations, including preparing materials, scheduling  
95 appointments and activities, preparing charts, records, or graphs, and performing checks and maintenance of  
96 equipment;
  - 97 15. Assisting clients with transitioning to and from therapy sessions; and
  - 98 16. Performing duties not otherwise restricted to the practice of speech-language pathology.
- 99 B. A speech-language pathologist assistant shall not engage in the practice of speech-language  
100 pathology, including the following:
- 101 1. Representing himself as a speech-language pathologist;
  - 102 2. Performing diagnostic tests or evaluations;
  - 103 3. Performing procedures that require a professional level of clinical judgment and technical skill;
  - 104 4. Interpreting results and observations of feeding and swallowing evaluations or screenings performed  
105 by a speech-language pathologist;
  - 106 5. Participating in formal conferences or meetings without the presence of the supervising  
107 speech-language pathologist;
  - 108 6. Providing interpretative information to a client, the family of a client, or any other individual;
  - 109 7. Writing, developing, or modifying a client's treatment plan;
  - 110 8. Assisting in or providing services described in subsection A unless directed by the supervising  
111 speech-language pathologist;
  - 112 9. Signing any formal documents in place of the supervising speech-language pathologist;
  - 113 10. Selecting a client for service or discharging a client from service;
  - 114 11. Making a decision regarding the need for additional services or making a referral for service;
  - 115 12. Disclosing clinical or confidential information either orally or in writing to anyone other than the  
116 supervising speech-language pathologist, unless mandated by law or authorized by the supervising  
117 speech-language pathologist; or
  - 118 13. Developing or determining the swallowing or feeding strategies or precautions for a client or provid  
119 ing feeding or swallowing treatment.
- 120 C. A licensed speech-language pathology assistant shall be supervised by a speech-language pathologist,

121 who shall retain full legal and ethical responsibility for the client.

122 **§ 54.1-2622. Continuing education.**

123 The Board shall promulgate regulations requiring continuing education for any speech-language  
124 pathology assistant license renewal or reinstatement. The Board may grant exceptions or exemptions from  
125 these continuing education requirements.

126 **§ 54.1-2623. Revocation or suspension; other sanctions.**

127 The Board may refuse to issue a license to any applicant; suspend, for a stated period or indefinitely, or  
128 revoke any license; or censure or reprimand any licensee or place such person on probation for such time as  
129 it may designate for any of the following causes:

- 130 1. Obtaining a license through fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation;
- 131 2. Being convicted of any felony or being convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude;
- 132 3. Using alcohol or drugs to the extent that such use renders the person unsafe to practice as a  
133 speech-language pathologist assistant;
- 134 4. Any unprofessional conduct likely to defraud or to deceive the public or patients;
- 135 5. Practicing in an intentional or negligent manner that causes or is likely to cause injury to a patient or  
136 patients;
- 137 6. Assisting persons whom he knew or had reason to believe were unlicensed to practice as a  
138 speech-language pathologist or speech-language pathologist assistant;
- 139 7. Violating, assisting, or inducing others to violate any provision of this article or any Board regulation;
- 140 8. Conducting his practice in a manner contrary to the standards of ethics of a speech-language  
141 pathologist assistant;
- 142 9. Practicing or causing others to practice in a manner that is dangerous to the health and welfare of his  
143 patients or to the public;
- 144 10. Practicing outside the scope of the speech-language pathologist assistant's education, training, and  
145 experience; or
- 146 11. Receiving a revocation, suspension, or restriction of a license to practice as a speech-language  
147 pathologist assistant in another state, possession, or territory of the United States or foreign country.

148 **§ 54.1-2624. Grounds for revocation or suspension.**

149 The Board may revoke or suspend the license of any speech-language pathologist assistant for any of the  
150 causes set forth in § 54.1-2623, insofar as the action is applicable to practicing as a speech-language  
151 pathologist assistant.

152 **2. That § 54.1-2605 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**

153 **3. That the provisions of the first and second enactments of this act shall become effective on July 1,**  
154 **2026.**

155 **4. That for any individual practicing as an assistant speech-language pathologist pursuant to §**  
156 **54.1-2605 of the Code of Virginia prior to the repeal of § 54.1-2605 of the Code of Virginia, the**  
157 **provisions of the first and second enactments of this act shall become effective on July 1, 2027.**

158 **5. That the Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology's initial adoption of regulations**  
159 **necessary to implement the provisions of this act shall be exempt from the Administrative Process Act**  
160 **(§ 2.2-4000 et seq. of the Code of Virginia), except that the Board of Audiology and Speech-Language**  
161 **Pathology shall provide an opportunity for public comment on the regulations prior to adoption of**  
162 **such regulations.**

163 **6. That the Board of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology shall amend and promulgate**  
164 **regulations in accordance with this act by July 1, 2026.**