



# **SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY AND HEARING AID DISPENSERS BOARD**

## Strategic Plan 2021-2024

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## Members of the Board

Dr. Dee Parker, Speech-Language Pathologist - Chair

Dr. Marcia Raggio, Dispensing Audiologist – Vice Chair

Holly Kaiser, Speech-Language Pathologist

Tod Borges, Hearing Aid Dispenser

Karen Chang, Public Member

Dr. Rodney Diaz, Otolaryngologist, Public Member

Amnon Shalev, Hearing Aid Dispenser

Debbie Snow, Public Member

Gavin Newsom, Governor

Lourdes M. Castro Ramírez, Secretary, Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

Kimberly Kirchmeyer, Director, Department of Consumer Affairs

Paul Sanchez, Executive Officer, Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology & Hearing Aid  
Dispensers Board

## Message from the Current Board Chair

As the newly elected chair of the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (Board), I am pleased to present the Strategic Plan 2021-2024.

Our Board is responsible for ensuring that every Californian, adult or child, has access to speech, language, and hearing healthcare services provided by licensed professionals who bring competency and skill to all pertinent patient needs. Our licensees must pass rigorous examinations and maintain continuing education that ensure the needed qualifications for providing the best and most appropriate services to California's consumers across the lifespan with communicative disorders.

The 2021-2024 Strategic Plan outlines the goals of our Board, which were developed by first evaluating the current needs of California's consumers, as well as those of our licensees, and to ensure efficient and successful board operations. In this document, key issues and activities can be found that we consider critical to the successful fulfillment of the Board's mission and goals.

In evaluating our responsibilities for ensuring and maintaining the needs of consumers, we are also aware of the challenges we face and are dedicated to developing the ways and means to meet them. The Board is continually working to meet its regulatory, legislative, and enforcement obligations with a consummate eye to updating and defining the needs of all we serve.

We encourage all stakeholders, whether consumers or professionals, to participate in the work of the Board to make sure we remain aware of any changing dynamics in the needs of consumers or for the professions we oversee.

## About the Board

The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board (Board) serves to protect the public by licensing and regulating speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and hearing aid dispensers who provide speech and hearing services to California consumers. The Board sets entry-level licensing standards, which includes examination requirements that measure the licensees' professional knowledge and clinical abilities that are consistent with the current demands for services of each respective field of practice. To ensure ongoing consumer protection, the Board enforces standards of professional conduct by investigating applicant backgrounds, investigating complaints against licensed practitioners and unlicensed providers, and taking disciplinary action whenever appropriate.

The Board is charged with regulating Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology, and Hearing Aid Dispensing; three separate and distinct professions with their own scopes of practice, entry-level requirements, and professional settings. Speech-language pathologists mainly provide services to individuals with speech, voice or language disorders and swallowing disorders or impairments. Audiologists provide services to individuals with hearing, balance (vestibular), and related communication disorders. Most audiologists are also licensed to dispense hearing aids and are called Dispensing Audiologists. Hearing Aid Dispensers provide services to individuals with impaired hearing which include hearing tests for the purposes of fitting, selection, and adaptation of hearing aids.

To balance the professional expertise and public input on the Board, the governance structure of the Board consists of two speech-language pathologists; two audiologists, one of whom must be a dispensing audiologist; two hearing aid dispensers; and three public members, one of which who must be a licensed, Board certified physician and surgeon in otolaryngology. All these members (except two public members) are appointed by the Governor. One public member seat is appointed by the Senate Rules Committee and one by the Speaker of the Assembly.

The Board is responsible for regulating the following license types and categories:

- Speech-Language Pathologist [Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section 2530.2(d)-(g)] – licensed to provide assessment and therapy for individuals who have speech, language, swallowing, and voice disorders.
- Audiologist [BPC Section 2530.2(j)-(k)]- licensed to identify hearing, auditory system, and balance disorders, and provide rehabilitative services, including hearing aids and other assistive listening devices.
- Dispensing Audiologists [BPC Section 2530.2(l)] – licensed to perform the duties of an Audiologist as described above and authorized to sell hearing aids.
- Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA) [BPC Sections 2530.2(i), 2538-2538.7] registered paraprofessionals who complete formal education and training and serve under the direction of a licensed speech-language pathologist.

- Required Professional Experience Temporary License [BPC Sections 2532.2(d), 2532.25, & 2532.7] - speech-language pathology and audiology applicants completing required professional experience to qualify for full licensure, practicing under the supervision of a licensed practitioner.
- Speech-Language Pathology Aide [BPC Section 2530.2(h)] – support personnel approved to work directly under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist. No requirement for formal education and training, but on-the-job training must be provided.
- Audiology Aide [BPC Section 2530.2(m)] - support personnel approved to work under the supervision of a licensed audiologist. No requirement for formal education and training, but on-the-job training must be provided.
- Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology Temporary License [BPC Section 2532.3] – speech-language pathologist or audiologist, licensed in another state, who qualifies for a six-month license while seeking permanent licensure.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser [BPC Section 2538.11] – licensed to fit and sell hearing aids, take ear mold impressions, post fitting procedures, and directly observe the ear and test hearing in connection with the fitting and selling hearing aids.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser Temporary License [BPC Section 2538.27] – hearing aid dispenser, licensed in another state, who qualifies for a 12-month temporary license while seeking permanent licensure.
- Hearing Aid Dispenser Trainee License [BPC Section 2538.28] – allows a hearing aid dispenser trainee applicant to work under the supervision of a licensed hearing aid dispenser for up to 18 months.
- Branch License- [BPC Section 2538.34] – licenses issued to hearing aid dispensers authorizing the dispenser to work at additional branch locations.
- SLPA Training Program [BPC Section 2538.1] – Board-approved training/educational programs.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Providers [BPC Section 2532.6] who offer CPD courses required for license renewal of speech-language pathology and audiology licensees.
- Continuing Education Courses (CE) [BPC Section 2538.18] – CE courses offered to Hearing Aid Dispensers required for license renewal.

The Board’s licensing population is over 35,000 individuals and entities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition; by 2024, the Speech-Language Pathologist and Audiologist professions are expected to grow by 21 percent and 29 percent, respectively in the United States.

# Mission, Vision, and Values

## Mission

We protect the people of California by promoting standards and enforcing the laws and regulations that ensure the qualifications and competence of providers of speech-language pathology, audiology, and hearing aid dispensing services.

## Vision

Every person in the State of California has access to diagnosis and treatment of communication disorders, and related services of the highest quality.

## Values

- Consumer protection
- Efficiency
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Accountability
- Effectiveness
- Service
- Transparency
- Inclusion

## Goal 1: Licensing

*The Board ensures licensing standards that protect consumers while permitting reasonable access into the professions.*

- 1.1 Provide access to licensing applications and payments on an online platform to improve efficiency.
- 1.2 . Complete and submit a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) to request additional licensing positions to meet the demand for licensing services and reduce processing times.
- 1.3 Develop an online system to account for continuing education hours.
- 1.4 Create an ad hoc telepractice committee to bring policy issues to the Board.

## Goal 2: Enforcement

*The health and safety of California's consumers is protected through the active enforcement of the laws and regulations governing the practices of speech-language pathology, audiology, and hearing aid dispensing.*

2.1 Create consumer and licensee resources that detail the enforcement process to increase transparency and engender more trust in the system.

2.2 Develop an online complaint system to improve interactivity and responsiveness for complainants and licensees.

2.3 Complete and submit a BCP to request additional enforcement positions to reduce enforcement timeframes and increase consumer protection.

## Goal 3: Outreach and Communications

*Consumers and other stakeholders are educated and informed about the practices, and laws and regulations governing the professions of speech-language pathology, audiology, and hearing aid dispensing.*

3.1 Educate stakeholders about why the regulatory process takes so long to set realistic expectations.

3.2 Communicate to stakeholders the status of regulations on the website to increase transparency.

3.3 Educate licensees about third party administrators to protect consumers and licensees.

## Goal 4: Laws and Regulations

*The health and safety of California consumers is protected by the laws and regulations governing the speech-language pathology, audiology and hearing aid dispensing professions.*

4.1 Develop, through the sunset review process, the statutory authority to collect and use stakeholder contact information to enhance the Board's ability to communicate with stakeholders.

4.2 Develop regulations regarding the appropriate level of supervision for trainees, aides, and assistants to safeguard consumer protection and seek statutory changes if necessary.

4.3 Evaluate if there are areas that need to be better defined in laws/regulations regarding oversight and what the scope of practice is in all professions under the Board in order to protect consumers and educate licensees.

## Goal 5: Program Administration

*The Board is committed to efficiently and effectively utilize resources and personnel to meet our goals and objectives.*

5.1 Utilize technology to develop methods to improve responsiveness to telephone inquiries from stakeholders/consumers to increase responsiveness to stakeholders and improve their access to the information they need.

5.2 Develop online tools that allow a user to check the status of transactions, including consumer complaints and license applications, to increase responsiveness to stakeholders and improve their access to the information they need.

5.3 Complete and submit a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) to request additional program administration positions to improve responsiveness to stakeholders and reduce processing timeframes in enforcement and licensing.

5.4 Implement training for staff, Board members, subject matter experts, and expert witnesses to maintain consistent communication and practices.

5.5 Move the Board to a new database and online application system to effectively utilize resources and personnel.

## Strategic Planning Process

To understand the environment in which the Board operates and to identify factors that could impact the Board's success, the California Department of Consumer Affairs' SOLID Planning unit conducted an environmental scan of the internal and external environments by collecting information through the following methods:

- ◆ Interviews conducted with all nine members of the Board, as well as the Executive Officer and Assistant Executive Officer, were completed during the months of September and October 2020 to assess the challenges and opportunities the Board is currently facing or will face in the upcoming years.
- ◆ An online survey was sent to the Board's 11 staff members, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Board from an internal perspective. Five Board staff participated.
- ◆ An online survey was sent to a Listserv of external Board stakeholders in September 2020 to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Board from an external perspective. Nine hundred stakeholders completed the survey.

The most significant themes and trends identified from the environmental scan were discussed by the Board members and executive team during a strategic planning session facilitated by SOLID Planning on November 20, 2020. This information guided the Board in the review of its mission, vision, and values while directing the strategic goals and objectives outlined in its new strategic plan.