

PRACTICE BUILDING

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SEC Medical Speech Pathology Consulting & Training
'Leaders in Medical Speech Pathology Education, Training and Business Practices'

SETTING UP A MOBILE FEES PRACTICE

SUMMARY

Setting up your own MobileFEES practice can be a great opportunity for a Speech Language Pathologist to expand their knowledge and skill set into their own business.

QUALIFICATIONS

Almost every state requires that speech-language pathologists be licensed or otherwise regulated (i.e., registration, certification). [Each state](#) may have different eligibility requirements, fees, and continuing education requirements. Practicing without a license or outside the scope of practice of the state licensure law constitutes a legal violation.

ASHA certification is a voluntary professional credential which certifies that the individual has received a master's or doctoral degree in speech-language pathology from an accredited program, has completed a Clinical Fellowship, and has passed the national examination.

ASHA certification provides these added benefits:

- Reimbursement by some private insurers requires ASHA certification.
- Some state Medicaid programs also require ASHA certification for reimbursement.
- Many employers require ASHA certification.
- ASHA certification is "portable." That is, it is recognized nationwide. Many states accept ASHA certification as evidence of meeting, in total or in part, licensure requirements.
- ASHA provides the ongoing support and information expected of a national professional organization.

Clinical Fellows may engage in private practice if they are appropriately supervised per ASHA guidelines, and hold a state license (if required). They may need to apply for a provisional license in states where licensure is required.

There is no "special" level of ASHA certification or state licensing to engage in a speech-language pathology private practice. ASHA certification and state licensure (where required) is sufficient for the private practice of either profession. [State licensing information is available](#) on ASHA's website.

An occupational license may be required at your city or county level in order to operate a business. Check with your local government.

STARTING YOUR PRACTICE

Considerations

- Am I prepared to spend time, money, resources to start business?
 - How much money is required to set up?
 - How long can I finance my company until I make a profit?
 - Will I need a loan?
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- What services should I offer?
- Who is my target market?
- Who is my competition?
- What is unique about my business?
- How soon will I be ready?

What are the different legal forms of a professional practice, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

A private practice may assume a number of [legal forms of organization](#), including:

- sole proprietorship
- partnership
- limited liability company
- corporation

Each type has different implications and requirements, as well as advantages and disadvantages.

What other professionals should I consult before starting up my business?

Private practitioners generally agree that it is important to work with an attorney and an accountant to help you develop your business. An accountant can advise you on the type of practice that will best meet your tax needs, set up a system for managing billing and accounts receivable, and advise you about paying withholding tax, if appropriate. An attorney specializing in business or contract law can also assist you in setting up your practice from a legal standpoint, and can review or help you develop a standard contract that you can use or adapt for different situations.

To locate qualified professionals, ask business people you know for a personal recommendation. Join local community service groups (Rotary Club, Kiwanis, etc.) or the [Chamber of Commerce](#) to network with business people. Invite a local attorney to speak at a professional meeting. You can also contact your state's chapter of the [American Bar Association](#) and the [American Institute of Certified Public Accountants](#) for referrals.

What state and local agencies should I consult for more information about setting up a practice?

If you wish to practice in a state that licenses speech-language pathologists, you must have a license. You should also request a copy of the actual licensure law from your [state licensure board](#).

If you wish to practice from your home or work from a business office, you may want to investigate whether your local zoning laws would permit you to open a home office, display advertising, or handle parking in a residential area. Contact your city or county zoning board. You should also check with your city or county administration to see if a business license is required. If you are renting commercial business space, your landlord should be able to provide guidance on these issues.

For assistance in starting your business, contact your [state speech and hearing association](#). Take advantage of opportunities for mentoring and collaboration in developing your practice through the state convention, the association newsletter, or interest groups.

For loans and other information, contact the [Small Business Administration](#).

To find out state regulations that may affect your practice, such as how long to retain medical records, contact your state health department.

Consider joining local service or business organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or the [Chamber of Commerce](#). Becoming a member may be a worthwhile investment to market your services and network with members of the business community.

What are the steps involved in developing a business plan?

A solid and detailed business plan provides the foundation for your business. It can always be modified as your business changes. If you are applying for a loan to start up your business, you must submit a detailed business plan.

The U.S. [Small Business Administration](#) suggests that a detailed business plan:

- offers a path to follow (shows you how to achieve your goals);
- may help in securing loans;
- can provide useful information for suppliers, personnel, and others
- can help you develop your management capabilities.

For a [business plan outline](#), visit this ASHA webpage.

What should I know about professional liability, and what resources are available?

The type of legal action that a client may bring against a clinician is called a "tort." Types of tort may result from *intentional harm*, such as intentional emotional distress; *negligent harm*, where unintended damage was caused by a breach of duty or failure to conform to a standard of professional care; or *strict liability*, where harm is suffered by the client that is not the fault of the clinician, but may be related to use of devices, diagnostic and therapeutic tools considered inherently harmful.

A tort is a private or civil wrong or injury, other than a breach of contract, for which the court will provide a remedy in the form of an action for damages. It is a legal wrong committed upon the person or property independent of contract. Three elements of every tort action are: 1) existence of legal duty from defendant to plaintiff; 2) breach of duty; and 3) damage as proximate result.

Other types of liability include "vicarious" liability for the actions of one's employees, or criminal liability, such as battery, larceny, embezzlement, forgery, or fraud in billing and documentation. Clinicians practicing in states with licensure also face legal action for violating state regulations governing their qualifications and activities.

To reduce the risk of violating standards of professional practice, clinicians should be familiar with ASHA's [scope of practice](#) for their profession, the [Code of Ethics](#), [Preferred Practice Patterns](#), and relevant [position statements](#). To maintain professional competence, clinicians should constantly educate themselves about evolving changes in practice.

Other potential areas of liability may be controlled by strictly observing and maintaining patient confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and documenting all services and communication provided to the client and others in an accurate, thorough, and timely way.

If you are self-employed you should protect yourself by obtaining [liability insurance](#). If you provide contract services in an institution, you may also be covered by their policy. It would be wise to have your own individual coverage in either case.

What types of technology can help me in my business practice, and what resources are available?

Basic equipment for a business office includes a telephone, computer with internet access, fax machine, and a copier/printer. However, the type of equipment will vary depending on the size and needs of the business practice.

Computer software is available for office management (i.e. billing, scheduling, accounting, maintaining a client database), clinical documentation, and treatment. Hiring a consultant with expertise in small business computer applications to advise you in hardware and software selection may be more cost-effective than trial-and-error purchase of systems or software that won't interface well or grow with your practice.

When considering the technology needs of your practice, keep in mind the HIPAA [security rule](#) and [electronic data interchange rule](#) if you are a HIPAA covered entity.

What resources are available about buying and selling a private practice?

Buying or selling a private practice is a big undertaking and requires careful thought and research. The purchase or sale of a practice is most successful when both buyer and seller have common goals and expectations. In the [Guide to Successful Private Practice in Speech-Language Pathology](#), a chapter is devoted to this issue.

MARKETING YOUR PRACTICE

For speech-language pathologists, marketing means reaching your clients, referral sources, media, the general public, and anyone else who could want or need your services. If you think about it, any time you tell someone and tell them what you do and how you do it-you're marketing!

There are two primary reasons why marketing is an essential part of your practice: (1) economic, and (2) professional identification.

Economic. The economic reasons are self-evident. You need to market to make money. Marketing helps you bring in new clients or retain existing clients. But economic considerations refer not just to the money you earn in any single year, but also the amount of money you lost as a result of not tapping your potential market or not tapping the market effectively.

Professional Identification. Marketing builds a greater awareness of yourself and your services in your community. Many people underestimate the importance of marketing as a way to increase public awareness. Ultimately, some of the most effective marketing tools (e.g., one-to-one meeting, speeches

before community groups, media outreach) are never utilized. A good way of approaching this is to view your public as stakeholders-that is, that your public has an investment in your success.

What are the steps involved in developing a marketing plan?

The marketing plan is a means to develop your marketing programs by turning marketing concepts into a written and usable guide. In the plan you assess of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and overall market competitiveness. In addition, your marketing plan develops a strategy for communicating your message to external audiences, and it provides you with an instrument for monitoring ongoing processes in your marketing activities.

What resources are available to help market my practice?

ASHA offers a variety of marketing products and services designed especially to help audiologists and speech-language pathologists promote their services. [ASHA Products](#) include:

- brochures, preprinted newsletters, posters
- specialty products
- [marketing and public relations resources](#)

REFERRAL PROCESS

One way to reach potential referral sources is to enroll in [ASHA ProFind](#). This is ASHA's premiere database for connecting consumers to members. If you are a bilingual service provider, you also have the option of registering in the ASHA Bilingual Service Provider Database. Send an e-mail to bilingual@asha.org for additional information. Your efforts should be equally divided between your referral network (Doctors, OTs, PTs, Daycare centers, etc.) and B2C advertising and social media

There are three main ways to initiate referrals for speech-language pathology services:

- 1) Physician orders for SLP evaluation and treatment upon admission to the long-term care facility. This is generally for acute conditions, such as recent onset of dysphagia, that were noted during a hospitalization.
- 2) Identification of residents during a screening. Screening is a non-billable service, and is generally consists of chart review, interview of staff and family, and brief observation of the resident. Screenings are generally conducted upon admission, upon specific referral of staff or family, and periodically to coincide with the facility's care plan schedule.
- 3) Staff/family referrals. In order to facilitate accurate referrals, the speech language pathologist must continually educate family members, other rehabilitation professionals, facility staff, physicians, and discharge planners regarding the variety of services they provide.

Identify your referral sources:

- Have a clear and specific idea as to what sets your practice apart from your competitors
- Your referring physicians need to be CONSTANTLY reminded of what you do and how well you do it (your specific training, fellowship, memberships, papers you have written, etc.)
- In order to build a robust referral base, your name needs to cross the desk of your referring desk

consistently and in a positive fashion. (This is going to happen by sending notes to your doctors and also by positive patient comments.)

- You must make sure your referring physicians have an easy and almost automatic way in which they can reach your office.
- Ask each and every referring physician: “What’s most important to you regarding how we take care of your patient?”

RESOURCES

Materials

- Business Matters: A Guide for SLP’s (ASHA)
- Guide to Successful Private Practice in SLP (ASHA)
- Health Plan Coding and Claims Guide (ASHA)
- Negotiating Health Care Contracts and Calculating Fees (ASHA)
- Getting your services covered: A guide for working with Insurance and Managed Care Plans (ASHA)
- The World of Corporate Speech Pathology by: Katie Schwartz
- Building Your Ideal Private Practice By: Lynn Grodzki

Other Activities to Consider

- Physician-only online communities like Doximity, QuantiaMD, Sermo and Medscape Physician Connect have become the leading digital gathering places for doctors seeking professional camaraderie, support and guidance.
- Join physician networking groups
- Collaboration with other disciplines: To be successful in the long-term care setting, you must work effectively within an interdisciplinary team. You will find numerous opportunities to work with physical therapists, occupational therapists, recreation therapists, nurses, social workers, dietitians, and others who provide care. The relationships you establish will determine in no small measure your effectiveness within this setting.

www.asha.org – For additional information regarding FEES procedures and proper practices

www.optim-llc.com - For information regarding the MobileFEES System Equipment

www.secmedicalspeech.com – For information on Consulting and Training in FEES and Videostroboscopy