

Hello MSHA membership! If you attended the MSHA Annual Convention the last few years you may have heard about “universal licensure” (UL), or maybe you received an email survey we sent out regarding this topic. Our survey results are in and they tell us that many more of you may still have [questions](#) and want to learn more about universal licensure and what it means for us as SLP/AUD practitioners in Mississippi. Our goal at MSHA is to keep our members updated on the progress regarding this topic and explain how the information collected in the surveys will be utilized.

For those of you that want a quick refresher, the ASHA website describes **universal license** as a comprehensive [state] license provided “by one body to regulate audiologists and speech-language pathologists, regardless of their work setting.” Currently in Mississippi, there are two regulating bodies for SLPs/AUDs. If you work in the educational setting, the Mississippi Department of Education is the regulating body of your state license that allows you to practice. If you work in healthcare in Mississippi at a hospital, outpatient clinic, skilled nursing facility, or other setting, your license to practice is regulated by the Mississippi Department of Health. Through our surveys and research, we learned that over half of the licensed practitioners in SLP/AUD currently work in **BOTH** education and healthcare settings. Currently that means the MS SLPs/AUDs need to have two licenses to practice in their two settings. This seems redundant in terms of time required to file CEUs, cost for licenses, paperwork, and accountability to employers. Due to regulations and lines of communication, there are situations when these two regulating entities do not/are not able to communicate with each other on various issues.

So you may be asking yourself why **universal licensure** is a proposed change supported by our national organization? ASHA, and many states who have already implemented universal licensure, agree that **one** regulating body or license guarantees only speech-language pathologists and audiologists with the appropriate qualifications and training will provide services to consumers of all ages, **regardless** of the setting.

Other talking points regarding the benefits associated with having **universal license** include the following:

- It would significantly deter the hiring or substitution of other workers who do not have the necessary, accurate and/or appropriate education, qualifications and training.
- It would provide job portability, allowing qualified individuals to apply for full licensure to work across all settings.
- It would enhance the recruitment of clinical fellows, SLPs, and AUDs to the state of Mississippi. This would increase accessibility to and reimbursement from third party payor sources who stipulate that only licensed /regulated professionals participate in their plans.
- It would deter unethical behaviors from professionals and employers, such as under/over utilization fraud and misrepresentation in schools and healthcare settings.
- It would allow for a venue for practicing SLPs/AUDs or other allied health professionals to express concerns regarding those who may be engaged in unethical or fraudulent practice.
- It would provide consumers with the ability to seek censure of individuals who have committed malpractice or other unethical behaviors and keep offenders from just leaving one setting and transferring into the other setting. (One regulating body would provide Mississippi the necessary authority to intervene and prohibit this process of provider misconduct between settings.)

- It would allow for easier license renewal, less time for license maintenance, and improve license reciprocity with neighboring states.

There is more information regarding **universal licensure** on the MSHA website and a [flowchart](#) that shows how UL would affect YOU.

So what's next for universal licensure in Mississippi? We heard you and we know that it is time to take it to the next level and introduce it to our legislative members in Mississippi. Your MSHA universal licensure committee members will spend the next few months working with ASHA, educating MSHA membership and working with MSHA board members and our legislative representatives to address this need and make us **ONE!**