

Question

In the state of Missouri, we have noticed that our school speech pathologists are having difficulty getting time off approved and/or reimbursement to attend continuing education events, including our Annual Convention and our two-day Fall Workshops. Our Convention is geared to provide continuing education opportunities for our medical and school therapists but our Fall Workshops are geared totally toward school based/early intervention therapists. Are other states having this difficulty and, if so, what have you done to work with your school therapists and school districts in order for them to be able to attend as well as be reimbursed for their continuing education? I might add, we have not raised our Convention fees for several years, and the resort where we meet gives us an amazing discount on room rates, so from a cost standpoint, that has remained steady for several years.

Sharon Sowder
MSHA President
VPCSmsha@gmail.com

Responses Received

In CT, there is not much reimbursement nor has there ever been to attend conferences. It really depends on the district. In addition, schools are obligated to provide professional development. SLP's need to advocate for time off to attend conferences and get CEU's. It certainly is getting more difficult with online opportunities and webinars.
Julie Zellner

West Virginia has had this difficulty for years. In the past year or two, we have become very involved with the WV Department of Education to be able to provide them information regarding our conference and why attendance is beneficial. We are very networked with our state level lead SLP and also the special education director in regards to this issue. Our attendance has improved over the past several years due to our collaboration with the WVDE. We have also created a public schools committee that is comprised of one member from each of our 55 counties. They are the "county liaison" for information, outreach, policymaking, etc. This has engaged our entire state's involvement in the association. We as well have not raised our fees in several years. Hope that this helps you!

Rhea L. Dyer, M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech Language Pathologist/Owner

We have not had this experience in Oklahoma. Our school based therapists are one of our largest crowds at our annual conference.
Suzanne Kimball
Oklahoma

We have the same issue in Florida. We offer on licensure years a Fall Conference geared toward school SLPs as well as dedicated tracks at our Annual Convention. We are also finding that the university staff is having difficulty getting reimbursed to attend, unless they are presenting. Even in my school district, some SLPs are having to take personal time to take CEs outside of the district (FLASHA, ASHA, other live seminars) which is based on principal discretion per our SLP supervisor. My supervisor says she can encourage the principals to provide us with professional leave pay/reimbursement, but she cannot demand they pay us this way. So as much as I would love to provide answers to this dilemma, I feel that it is very huge challenge due to the way schools in each state are run; whether at the state level or the district level. I would love to hear how other state associations address this concern or if they too have similar concerns that CSAP and/or ASHA could help all of us address.

Lisa

Lisa Garrett, MS, CCC-SLP

In Ohio our school therapists have been struggling with the same issue for many years now. There are several districts that offer no continuing education monies to our school SLP's. Our response, similar to your own, is to keep the convention fees as feasible as possible, support them with issues as they bring them to us, representation through our Government Affairs Coalition and offering of convention dates in various formats (full convention, two day, one day, week day, weekend day, etc...) It is indeed a matter of concern, especially as SLP documentation in the schools may be used to receive federal funding....then the received monies are transferred to another source rather than CE for the SLP in the schools.

Donna Edwards

Alabama has about 60-70% school-based SLP attendance at our annual convention. We offer a session about state department updates (always a packed session) and we also invite all the SpEd coordinators in the state to attend this session at no cost. The SpEd coordinators get a certificate of attendance, and I guess they can use it for continuing ed hours. I think it helps to have SpEd coordinators attend- they can see how fabulous the convention is, and learn something themselves.

Also, if any system bills to Medicaid, their SLPs must have their state license- all of our CEUs at convention are ASHA and state license approved.

Good luck

In NH, it varies by school district as reimbursement is likely dependent upon collective bargaining. In my school, our professional development is fantastic. We get 4 professional days per year and I get reimbursed for everything (the equivalent of nine graduate credits/year). Reimbursement can be applied to activities including (but are not limited to) courses, workshops, combinations of course/workshop, visitations, projects, or other types of activities as listed in the Master Plan for Staff Development.

I am aware of other districts whose professional development policies are less generous. As it is dependent on collective bargaining, it would behoove SLPs to work with their unions and negotiate for better professional development.

I hope this helps.

Annie Doyle, M.A., CCC-SLP

President, New Hampshire Speech, Language, Hearing Association, Inc.

I know in the state of Arkansas, several of the school districts pay for their SLPs to attend our state conference, but for those who don't, most still allow their SLPs to attend through professional leave. In the district that I work for, the largest in the state, they do not pay for us to attend, but they let us take professional leave to attend. We do however have to make up that therapy time either prior to or after we return from the conference.

Hope this helps,

Kamela Rowland, MS, C

We are having issues with this in NE as well and don't have a solution yet. Would be interested to hear what other states are doing also. Thanks, Missouri!

Shari DeVeney, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

In Arkansas, I think we have only seen this issue within certain districts. Most districts are supportive of school-based SLPs attending ArkSHA, though I feel that our numbers could be better with school-based attendees.

Best regards,

Jeff Adams, ArkSHA President

We are having the same problem. School based attendance at both our regular convention and at our spring convention (which is geared towards school SLPs) has fallen. Our solution, which we are currently implement—so I don't know if it has worked yet—has been to talk with as many school-based SLPs as we can, figure out what issues they are having and then scheduling meetings with school administrators to discuss those issues. These issues have included time off for convention, but also include other issues such as caseload size. It is our hope that by showing that we are trying to help school-based SLPs that we can build a grass roots effort to improve the strength of our organization and improve life for the school based SLP.

Marc

We have our Convention in June so we have no issue with school SLP's getting time off.

Good Luck to your organization,
Ramona Bonnette from Louisiana.