

APHASIA

*Theory to Practice:
Lessons Learned
from Interprofessional Collaboration*

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Marketing and Public Relations Task Force

Designing a plan for CSHA's future: Calling all Members

Kathy Murphy, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Is anyone listening? Yes. Your questions are what provided the seed to form the CSHA Marketing Task Force and pursue the recently awarded ASHA Personnel Issues grant. Until recently, member concerns were addressed on an individual basis with a simple question to the CSHA Board. Your questions repeatedly focused on the changing role and practice expectations for speech-language pathologists and audiologists. More specifically, many asked how to better advocate for their recommended services in an era of increasing overlap with other service providers' practices.

Shortly after the Marketing Task Force was appointed, the research began. This included a review of each state association's speech-language hearing association's current marketing practices including use of social media, public awareness campaigns, and membership drives. Each state website was reviewed for content, technology and user-friendliness. Several organizations' efforts resonated with the committee. The committee further interviewed individuals from these organizations who had recently implemented significant changes to their websites and marketing strategies. Other members researched effective marketing tools to learn what was currently available to support individuals seeking information about practice, the profession, and communication disorders. This included YouTube video searches, expanded interviews, and a historical records review.

This extensive research generated a general understanding of member needs and a starting place for developing a marketing plan. The ASHA Personnel Issues Grant has been available to state organizations for more than five years, and it provides an invaluable resource. This year nine state associations were awarded one of these grants to address a wide range of identified member needs. The primary goal identified in the CSHA proposal was to improve overall public awareness and engage members more effectively through improved communication. This included developing a long term strategic plan with accountability across each level. A significant portion of the budget has been allocated to hiring professional marketing consultants to guide the process that will include establishing a new brand, updating the website, and developing expanded communication formats with identified targeted groups.

Grantees are required to formally report on their efforts by December 2012, and CSHA is on-track with its projected timeline. After more than six months of meeting monthly via conference calls, members of the Task Force met in early June with the selected marketing consultant, McNally Temple Associates, Inc. The initial tasks included identifying target groups for marketing efforts, brainstorming key thoughts for developing a new CSHA brand, and prioritizing marketing efforts. With a primary goal to increase overall public awareness, data will continue to drive and inform this process. Past and current CSHA members will be asked to play a valuable role through ongoing surveys and participation in various tasks. The Task Force identified a critical need to update the CSHA website, and Google analytics will be incorporated to provide data regarding current and future user traffic patterns (e.g. what information are individuals searching for and how long do users remain engaged in various parts of the website). Funds have also been allocated for editing existing videos to provide an alternative, powerful message format, and maximizing CSHA efforts through search engine optimization (i.e. to increase the likelihood CSHA will occur during a user's web searches).

This is a vast project. Your role as a CSHA member is changing. Participate. Share opinions. Volunteer. Recruit colleagues. ♦

Marketing Speech-Language Pathology Services: Everyone Needs to Participate!

Deb Swain, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

In September, 2011 the CSHA board voted to constitute a Marketing and Public Relations task force to address member concerns about speech-language pathology public awareness and delivery as well general public relations. This task force has been fielding member questions, concerns, and recommendations that affect reimbursement, scope of practice and service delivery.



Funding marketing and public relation efforts can be expensive and labor intensive. The task force applied for operating funds through the ASHA Personnel Grant Program and was granted \$5000 in March of this year. The CSHA board subsequently approved matching funds that provided the task force with \$10,000 seed money to launch a marketing and public relations campaign. The task force has secured the services of a marketing and public relations firm in Sacramento that will provide

training for the development and implementation of a marketing plan. The purpose of developing a marketing and public relations plan is to identify and implement specific measurable goals and objectives intended to promote speech-language services, educate the general public of these services and minimize the confusion about our services compared to other related professional services. This huge first step will enable CSHA to have a formal and sustainable plan for the promotion and advancement of speech-language and hearing services in the state of California.

In order to achieve a primary goal of heightening our visibility as essential and valuable health and educational care providers, it is critical that all CSHA members get on board to assist with these efforts.

The CSHA board is comprised of numerous volunteers who are dedicated to the goals of the organization and the needs of the professional and student members. In addition to these board members, there are volunteers at the district level who serve on advisory and nomination committees. Other volunteers assist with CEU events and recruitment activities. However, in order to meet the increasing demands of member concerns, address scope of practice issues, increase our professional visibility, and create a sustainable course of action, we need the support and participation from all of our membership.

Some may say "that is why I pay my dues" or "I don't have time to volunteer" or "I pay my dues and that's all I can do". CSHA can no longer afford to allow these sentiments to linger and characterize our volunteer leadership potential. With the limited number of CSHA volunteers, it is difficult for the organization to meet all of the urgent challenges facing our professions. Currently, the CSHA organization has 3 full-time employees, one part-time employee, and 37 members on the board who serve on a volunteer basis. Reimbursement, scope of practice, and professional boundaries are issues that warrant our energy, attention and resources. With the support of all of our members, CSHA will be able to respond to these issues with success.

The CSHA Marketing and Public Relations task force's primary goal is to attend to the needs of the CSHA membership. CSHA wants to build membership and develop systems for improving and increasing communication with its members. The Task Force has reviewed other state associations' web sites to identify how CSHA can improve communication, information and collaboration with members and consumers. A portion of the grant funding will enable the CSHA organization to restructure the website so that it can provide member and consumer information that is useful and assists in promoting speech-language services within the members and the state of California.

Like other professional organizations CSHA is looking to the future and working to be effective and sustainable. Our membership reflects diversity, excellence, leadership, scholarship, and tenacity that can all be used effectively to build a sustainable and effective organization.

We want to hear from our members! Let CSHA or the Marketing and Public Relations task force hear your comments, input or suggestions. We need the input and support from all CSHA members to meet the ongoing and increasing demands of the profession and community! ♦