

Pursuing a Career as a Speech-Language Pathologist

Profession Overview

Speech-language pathology is the study and treatment of human communication and its disorders. Speech-language pathologists work with the full range of human communication to evaluate, diagnose and treat speech, language and swallowing disorders in individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly.

Typical Duties:

- ▶ Evaluate levels of speech, language, or swallowing difficulty
- ▶ Identify clients' goals for treatment
- ▶ Create and carry out an individualized treatment plan that addresses specific functional needs
- ▶ Teach clients how to make sounds, improve their voices, and maintain fluency
- ▶ Help clients improve vocabulary and sentence structure
- ▶ Work with clients to develop and strengthen the muscles used to swallow
- ▶ Counsel clients and their families on how to cope with communication and swallowing disorders

Speech-language pathologists [work in a variety of settings](#), including educational settings, health care facilities and private practice. Check out more information about this career [on the Explore Health Careers webpage](#).

Education Programs

Speech-language pathologists must earn a graduate degree in speech-language pathology from one of the 330 programs accredited by the [Council on Academic Accreditation](#), complete a supervised postgraduate clinical fellowship, and obtain a passing score on a national examination.

Admission Requirements: Knowledge and Strategies

Work with your faculty advisor and/or a member of [Kenyon's Health Professions Advising Committee \(HPAC\)](#) to plan for prerequisite requirements. As Kenyon does not have an undergraduate major in communication sciences and disorders (CSD), you will need to complete some prerequisites before applying to graduate school or as part of the program itself. Common prerequisites include: general biology, general chemistry, physics, statistics, phonetics, child language development, anatomy and physiology of speech and hearing, audiology and speech science/acoustics. Start early and consult each institution's website for specific requirements. The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) [provides a listing of accredited schools](#) offering a speech-language pathology program, which is a great starting point for understanding admission expectations.

In pursuing a degree in speech-language pathology, Kenyon students have two pathways to choose from:

Pathway #1: You obtain a bachelor's degree in a major other than CSD and take prerequisite coursework before applying for admission to graduate school. Some institutions offer leveling options to complete prerequisite coursework or second bachelor's degree programs to prepare students to apply for graduate programs. Other programs offer prerequisites online to students who are not enrolled in the programs.

Pathway #2: You obtain a bachelor's degree in a major other than CSD and apply to graduate schools that do not require prerequisite courses for admission. Students without the required coursework will generally take the courses as part of the graduate program. The graduate program may take longer, depending on the number of prerequisite courses that the student needs to take.

According to ASHA's certification standards, 25 hours of guided clinical observation are required as part of the 400 total clinical hours needed for certification. These observation hours give you exposure to clinical practice before you begin hands-on training in graduate school. Most programs expect you to complete some or all of these hours before enrollment.

When you submit an application, remember you will do so through a centralized application site: [Communication Sciences and Disorders Centralized Application Service \(CSDCAS\)](#). CSDCAS generally opens in July of each year, and early applications are recommended as schools operate on a rolling admissions cycle.

Standardized Tests

Depending on your programs of interest, you will be preparing and taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Learn more about the [GRE on ETS's website](#). Programs may set minimum scores and last acceptable test dates, but not every program will require the GRE.

General Advising Information

- Build relationships: create a strong network of pre-health advisors, faculty, peers and professionals. Remember, such connections can open up opportunities for you and letters of recommendation will be required to apply. Providing three letters of recommendation is common, with many programs seeking letters from professors.
- Plan financially: Costs of attending individual programs also vary widely. Visit the [Financial Resources page of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association](#) for help developing a financial plan for this pathway.

Want more information?

Make an appointment with Sara Stasko in the CDO via [Handshake](#) or email stasko1@kenyon.edu. Connect with a faculty advisor on the [Health Professions Advising Committee \(HPAC\)](#).