

PROVINCIAL MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

**Report of the Market Supplement Review
Committee**

Speech Language Pathologist

Final Report

August 6, 2002

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Saskatchewan Market Supplement Program is to ensure that Saskatchewan health care employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria to address recruitment/retention pressures.

A temporary market supplement will be an acceptable option only if:

- a) workplace initiatives have not addressed the skill shortage;
- b) labour market data supports a supplement; and,
- c) recruitment/retention is a problem, is affecting service delivery and is well documented.

This report deals with the Market Supplement Review Committee's analysis of the recruitment/retention pressures facing employers with respect to Speech Language Pathologists

OVERVIEW

The Market Supplement Review Committee reviewed documentation included in the request for consideration of a market supplement for Speech Language Pathologists.

A total of 10 employers reported that they employ Speech Language Pathologists (SLP's) in their Health Districts for the purpose of this report. The Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan also contributed information for this report. Of the 10 employers, 5 report vacancies in this classification. The provincial vacancy rate is 28% for full-time positions and, 7.7% vacancy for part-time positions.

Role of a Speech Language Pathologist:

Speech Language Pathologists provide their service to either pediatric and adult clients from acute care to the community. Adult inpatient services are provided within acute care facilities and outpatient services. Within the patient population, Speech Language Pathologists may provide dysphagia (swallowing assessment and treatment) services and communication assessment and treatment services to a wide range of patients with neurological based disorders (stroke, head injury, ALS, Parkinsons, MS, neurosurgical patients, head and neck surgical patients). Pediatric inpatient services are similar although a greater range of patients are referred.

There is a national shortage of SLP's in Canada. There are 6 Canadian training programs located at the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, McGill University and Dalhousie University. There is no training program in Saskatchewan which becomes a disadvantage when hiring new grads. Typically, students complete their internships and practicums within the province they attend university, become familiar with the system and are offered positions at these locations. Currently, Saskatchewan does not purchase seats in any of these training programs. There is another school at Minot State

University in North Dakota where a small number of Canadians graduate. In 2001, 8 Canadians graduated.

Timing of hiring is crucial. The Canadian programs graduate students from May to August while, Minot State University graduates students in December. Saskatchewan employers may experience long vacancy periods if they do not hire these grads at these times. Also, both Alberta and Ontario have substantially increased the number of positions in their systems which will make recruiting to Saskatchewan difficult, given the wage disparity. Two years ago, Alberta created an additional 85 positions to be phased in over the next five years to satisfy their need for SLP's.

Information regarding budgeted positions and vacancies is provided in the following table:

Speech Language Pathologist – Table 1

Districts	Number of Budgeted Positions (As of March 1, 2002)		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions (As of March 1, 2002)		% Vacancy	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Midwest Health District	1	0	0	0		
South Central Health District	3	1	3	1	100%	100%
Moose Jaw Thunder Creek	*2	1	0	0		
North Central Health District	2	1	0	0		
East Central Health District	2	1	2	0	100%	
Prince Albert Health District	2	1	0	0		
Saskatoon District Health	25	4	6	0	24%	
Regina Health District	10	2	1	0	10%	
Keewatin Yatthe Health District	0	1	0	0		
Battlefords Health District	3	1	2	0	66%	
TOTAL	50	13	14	1	28%	7.7%

* Note – Moose Jaw Thunder Creek has 1 full-time temporary position and 1 full-time permanent position.

ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as guided by the Provincial Market Supplement Program framework.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS: *(Employers were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages, potential staff short term service delivery impacts, potential long term service delivery impacts and options for alternative service delivery models).*

Those Districts that reported vacancies are experiencing significant waiting lists and in some cases, offer no service. One major employer experiences a waiting list of between 5 to 12 months for pediatric outpatients services, which contradicts the Department of Health's policy of early intervention. This same employer noted that the existing SLP's are feeling the pressure to service families from other health districts in southern Saskatchewan who either have a shortage of SLP's

or, none at all. They also reported that there is no SLP service for rural children and limited community follow up.

While longer waiting lists are being experienced and essential service in some areas is not being met, employers reported that caseloads are increasing and staff are burning out trying to meet the demand.

7 of the 10 Districts reported growing waiting lists and/or deletion of some service. Staff are becoming increasingly frustrated in attempting to keep up with the caseloads.

Contracting out of Service:

A recent SAHO survey of employers regarding the practice of "contracting out" indicated that 4 of 19 Districts use contract services for SLP's. Survey findings include:

- One District has used contract services the last 2 years on occasion to help reduce preschool wait lists. Another District has used this same resource to help cover an extended leave of absence.
- Another District will begin contracting out some SLP preschool services in July, 2002. They plan to arrange 50 to 66 days between July and December, 2002. The contract will cost between \$26,000 and \$34,320 for this period of time. This District decided to utilize contract services because they currently do not have SLP's to provide service to preschool children. Their preference is to hire and will reassess their position later in the year.
- One District uses contract services for their Adult SLP position. They use the service for periods of time beginning December, 2001. Their intention is to continue this arrangement until they are able to fill their position which has proven difficult.

VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences {i.e., seasonal vacancies; do the vacancies always follow an event; etc.} and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts).*

The vacancy rate for Speech Language Pathologists for Saskatchewan Health Districts is 28% for permanent full-time positions and, 7.7% for permanent part-time positions.

A survey conducted in November, 2001, by Saskatchewan SLP's, revealed a provincial vacancy rate of 30.5% for preschool services and 28.4% for adult services in Saskatchewan (based on FTE's).

The time to fill a vacancy is long. One large employer reports that it consistently takes up to 9 months to recruit for vacant positions and another large employer states 6 months to 1 year to fill vacancies.

One employer reports that filling temporary positions has become increasingly difficult in the past 1 to 2 years. Most temporary positions remain unfilled as there are no SLP's in the area who are available to work. With no training program in Saskatchewan, there is not a ready pool of candidates to fill positions. Due to the number of available positions across Canada, especially Alberta, as well as the higher paying positions with the School Boards, temporary positions do not get filled.

TURNOVER RATES: *(Employers were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover {loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.).*

The turnover of employees as reported by the employers include:

- Resigned for positions with School Boards because of higher wage.
- Resigned for higher wages in Alberta.
- Resigned because spouse was transferred

Turnover of employees is a concern for all employers who have experienced loss of staff. The ability to replace their employees has proven very difficult because of the difference in pay with Alberta as well as the Boards of Education. One employer reports that since 1995 when their Speech Language Pathologists position was created, there have been 4 incumbents up to August, 2001. The position is still vacant.

It is difficult to fill temporary SLP positions. For permanent positions, the length of time to fill depends a great deal on when the position is available in relation to when new students are entering the market place.

WORKPLACE INITIATIVES: *(Employers were asked to identify workplace initiatives undertaken to address staff shortages, i.e., workload, job redesign, local joint union/management processes, health & safety, etc.).*

An important initiative that employers have discussed with the Department of Health, is the development of provincial bursary programs, purchasing training seats at other provincial universities, and, paid internships/residency programs for Saskatchewan employers. These are important measures that could improve the recruiting and retention efforts of employers on a consistent provincial basis. Discussions are ongoing in this regard.

Employers have attempted to accommodate their employees in various ways. At least 3 Districts are offering flex time, involving staff in establishing priorities and guidelines, and, having SLP's manage their client base.

Smaller employers are attempting to provide their SLP staff learning opportunities by attending educational opportunities and/or conferences. SLP's are required to obtain 45 continuing education credits over a three year period in order to maintain their licensure to practice. One major employer has initiated a \$200 financial incentive towards American Certification for staff to maintain their American certification. This allows the employer to offer externships to Canadian citizens who are completing their schooling in the USA.

At least one employer has attempted to pay their incumbents at a higher pay step within the current wage scale.

One District reports attempting to look at different service delivery including group public education, group therapy, working with preschools "Headstart" programs and, different consultation systems.

RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS: *(Employers were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc., as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts).*

There is a national shortage of Speech Language Pathologists. Saskatchewan is at a recruiting disadvantage due to the fact that there are no training schools in the province. Currently, there are no seats that the province purchases for Saskatchewan students at any of the universities. However, the Department of Health does offer bursaries i.e. 6 in 2001, to Saskatchewan students.

Employers have attempted a variety of means in their recruiting efforts. Typically, advertising on national websites and Saskatchewan newspapers is done routinely by employers. Seven of the 10 employers have offered a combination of relocation allowance and/or signing bonuses. The terms of these arrangements ranges from \$2,000 to \$5,000 with a 2-year commitment.

Many employers who have experienced vacancies are reporting that the vacancy time has increased. One major employer has indicated that permanent position vacancy time has increased from 1.8 months in 1999 and 3.8 in 2000, to 8 months currently. Temporary positions are extremely difficult to fill. The majority of temporary positions go unfilled which places great pressure on the existing staff to "cover off" the work.

SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS: *(Employers were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons).*

Speech Language Pathologists are able to earn more without leaving Saskatchewan. In comparison with the Board of Education in a major centre, they have the ability to pay an additional 10% to their regular rates of pay.

In Alberta, SLP's can earn up to 20% more at the entry level as well as at the top level for the Bachelor level SLP's.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES: *(The magnitude and timing of any market adjustment will be subject to the availability of existing resources. Please make any comments as to the impact of addressing this staff shortage if resources are not available in the short term).*

The vacancy rates and the time to recruit for Saskatchewan Health Districts has steadily increased during the past 2 years. Saskatchewan employers also experience the recruiting challenges of having to look outside the province to recruit new grads. Therefore, there is concern amongst employers that service delivery will continue to suffer as the employment market for SLP's gets more competitive.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Considering all the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee makes the following conclusions:

1. An impact to service delivery is being experienced by most reporting Health employers. The Committee has concluded that growing waiting lists and/or deleting SLP services are significant risks that are currently being experienced by 7 of the 10 reporting Health Districts.

2. At the time of this survey, the vacancy rate for SLP positions was very high. A vacancy rate of 28% for permanent full-time and 7.7% for permanent part-time positions indicates the degree of difficulty that employers are experiencing with recruiting and retaining to SLP positions.
3. The Committee acknowledges that there have been substantive workplace initiatives made by employers to minimize the impact felt by the shortage of SLP's. A variety of initiatives have made serious effort to retain as well as attract candidates to Saskatchewan Health Districts. One initiative in particular would be very valuable in lessening the effects of the SLP staff shortages. Purchasing seats at other provincial university SLP programs could serve as a means to plan for and, develop our own SLP workforce within Saskatchewan. Discussions have been held with the Department of Health in this regard.

Having reviewed the employer and union information and considering all the labour market criteria defined by the market supplement framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee recommends:

1. A temporary market supplement for the Speech Language Pathologist classification be implemented.
2. SAHO Labour Relations assess the current practices with respect to this classification, and work to standardize those practices.

Market Supplement Consideration Request – Speech Language Pathologist

Employer Respondents

1. Midwest Health District
2. South Central Health District
3. Moose Jaw Thunder Creek Health District
4. North Central Health District
5. East Central Health District
6. Prince Albert Health District
7. Regina Health District
8. Saskatoon Health District
9. Keewatin Yatthe Health District
10. Battlefords Health District