



## MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION

### INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY | 20 - 0022 - C

#### **Findings of Reasonable Grounds to Believe that a Somerset County Public School System, Speech – Language Pathologist Assistant Practiced Without a Valid State of Maryland License**

The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) received a complaint regarding the employment of an unlicensed Speech – Language Pathology Assistant (SLP-A) at the Somerset County Public School (SCPS) system.

A preliminary review of this complaint and statements made as a result of an investigation indicated that at the time of the employment interview, the individual identified only provided a copy of their limited licensure application to the Maryland Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing and Dispensers and Speech-Language Pathologists (MDBOE). The individual did not have a license issued by the State of Maryland.

We found that the SCPS system, Office of Human Resources and the Office of Special Education did not, prior to offering employment with SCPS, receive a copy of the required license, nor maintained a copy as part of their personnel records. Throughout school years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, the SLP-A did work, under the supervision of a licensed SLP, directly with students in the area of speech and language therapy.

In addition to interviews with the SLP and unlicensed SLP-A, representatives of the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Special Education were interviewed regarding required on-site State certifications for employees hired as SLP's and SLP-A's.

The SLP supervisor and SLP-A have separated from employment with the SCPS system prior to this investigation.

After a review of all statements, the OIGE investigation substantiated the complaint and found that the SLP-A did not provide a copy of the required license. The OIGE also found a systemic breakdown in designated responsibilities between the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Special Education. This breakdown afforded the SLP-A to be hired and employed with the SCPS for a period of two (2) years.

The OIGE did not find clear and convincing evidence that the SCPS intentionally omitted the certification of the limited licensure. Accordingly, we found reasonable grounds to believe that

the SCPS system lacked a policy or procedure delegating a respective division or divisional supervisor with direct or final review responsibility related to employment required final documents and licenses. The OIGE provided its report of investigation to the MDBOE.

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Unless otherwise noted, the OIGE applies the preponderance of the evidence standard in determining whether local school system personnel have committed misconduct.