



ABESPA's Guide for Consumers

The Alabama Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (ABESPA) does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

What is the purpose of the Alabama Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (ABESPA)?

To help ensure the highest quality of speech-language pathology and/or audiology services to the consumers of Alabama, it is necessary to provide regulatory authority over persons offering such services to the public. The practice of speech-language pathology and audiology is a privilege granted to qualified persons by legislative authority in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare. The intent of the licensure law is to:

- (1) Require educational training and licensure of any person who engages in the practice of speech-language pathology and/or audiology.
- (2) To encourage better educational training programs.
- (3) To prohibit the unauthorized and unqualified practice of speech-language pathology and/or audiology, and
- (4) To prohibit the unprofessional conduct of persons licensed to practice speech-language pathology and/or audiology.

In an effort to protect the consumers of Alabama, a process has been provided by which complaints can be filed against persons violating ABESPA's licensure law.

Who Can File a Complaint?

A complaint can be filed by anyone who believes that an individual has acted illegally, irresponsibly, or unprofessionally in providing care to a client. The most effective complaints are those that contain firsthand, verifiable information. The Board cannot act on anonymous complaints. Therefore, all complaints must be in writing.

How do I file a Complaint?

A complaint must first be submitted in writing and signed before it can be processed. Individuals who file complaints are notified in writing of the status of their complaint throughout the process.

When submitting a complaint, as much detail as possible should be stated, as well as copies of any documents that can be used as evidence. Original documents should not be mailed. Dates, times and the type of service received should be included whenever possible.

What Other Documentation Does ABESPA Require to Process a Complaint?

To facilitate the process of a complaint, the following forms are available for your convenience (click on the highlighted form name to view and print):

Complaint Form – This form can help structure your complaint, although a written letter describing the same information is acceptable.

Waiver of Anonymity – The complainant (person filing the complaint) must sign this form so ABESPA can investigate the given complaint.

Authorization for Disclosure/Request of Protected Health Information (PHI) – ABESPA will need authorization to obtain medical records for the investigation of a given complaint (if applicable).

How are Complaints Processed?

Once a complaint has been received, a letter is mailed to the complainant confirming receipt of their complaint and a case number is assigned. The case number protects the anonymity of the complainant and the person being reported. Only the secretary, the Assistant Attorney General and the Credentials Review Chair know the identities of the involved parties.

After investigating the complaint, the Credentials Review Chair will make a recommendation to the Board and the Board will make a ruling. If the Board rules to pursue a formal disciplinary hearing, the complaint is forwarded to the Assistant Attorney General who represents the State in the matter.

The entire process of a complaint can be completed within a couple of months or may take much longer depending upon the unique circumstances and complexities of each case. The outcomes can vary, but are not limited to: closing the file with no action from the Board, imposing fines, license suspension, reprimand issuance, or revocation of licensure.

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