

Listening and Spoken Language Specialist (LSLS®) Certification

RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The AG Bell Academy for Listening and Spoken Language (the Academy) is the certification body that administers the LSLS certification process. A subsidiary of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Academy has offices in Washington, D.C., and Madrid, Spain. The Academy envisions a future where all individuals and families will have access to a certified Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) professional who provides listening and spoken language services. The Academy's mission is to *advance listening and talking through standards of excellence and international certification of professionals.*

Q. What is Listening and Spoken Language (LSL)?

A. LSL is one of the options parents/caregivers choose to help their child who is deaf or hard of hearing learn and communicate. LSL is provided according to the Principles of Listening and Spoken Language. Strategies for developing listening and spoken language are called LSL strategies and these strategies are used to help the child learn to listen and talk. Families should consider what they desire to see as outcomes for their child as they evaluate which of several communications options are available for their child to use. Basic information about the primary communication options can be found on [AG Bell's website](#), but families and professionals are encouraged to find other in-depth information through books and online and in-person courses.

Q. What is Listening and Spoken Language Specialist (LSLS®) Certification?

A. LSLS certification is a credential that is pursued, earned and maintained by professionals who work with families who wish to pursue the option of LSL. Audiologists, speech-language pathologists and teachers of children who are deaf and hard of hearing may seek certification. Certified LSL professionals, when engaged in LSL practice, typically focus on teaching the child as well as modeling, guiding and coaching his/her caregivers and educators (if in a school environment) on how to develop LSL. Intentional and timely pursuit of excellent pediatric audiology services, early fitting and use of hearing technology during the child's awake hours, and ongoing LSL services with sequenced goals, objectives and use of LSL strategies help the child develop and maximize his/her ability to listen and talk as part of natural, everyday life.

Q. Who can pursue LSLS Certification?

A. LSLS certification is a highly regarded qualification that can be earned by professionals who have a professional degree (either a bachelor or graduate-level degree that allow a professional to practice) in audiology, deaf education or speech-language pathology. Administered by the Academy since 2005, LSLS certification is considered the defining qualification of a professional who has specialized in and can competently guide the development of LSL in children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

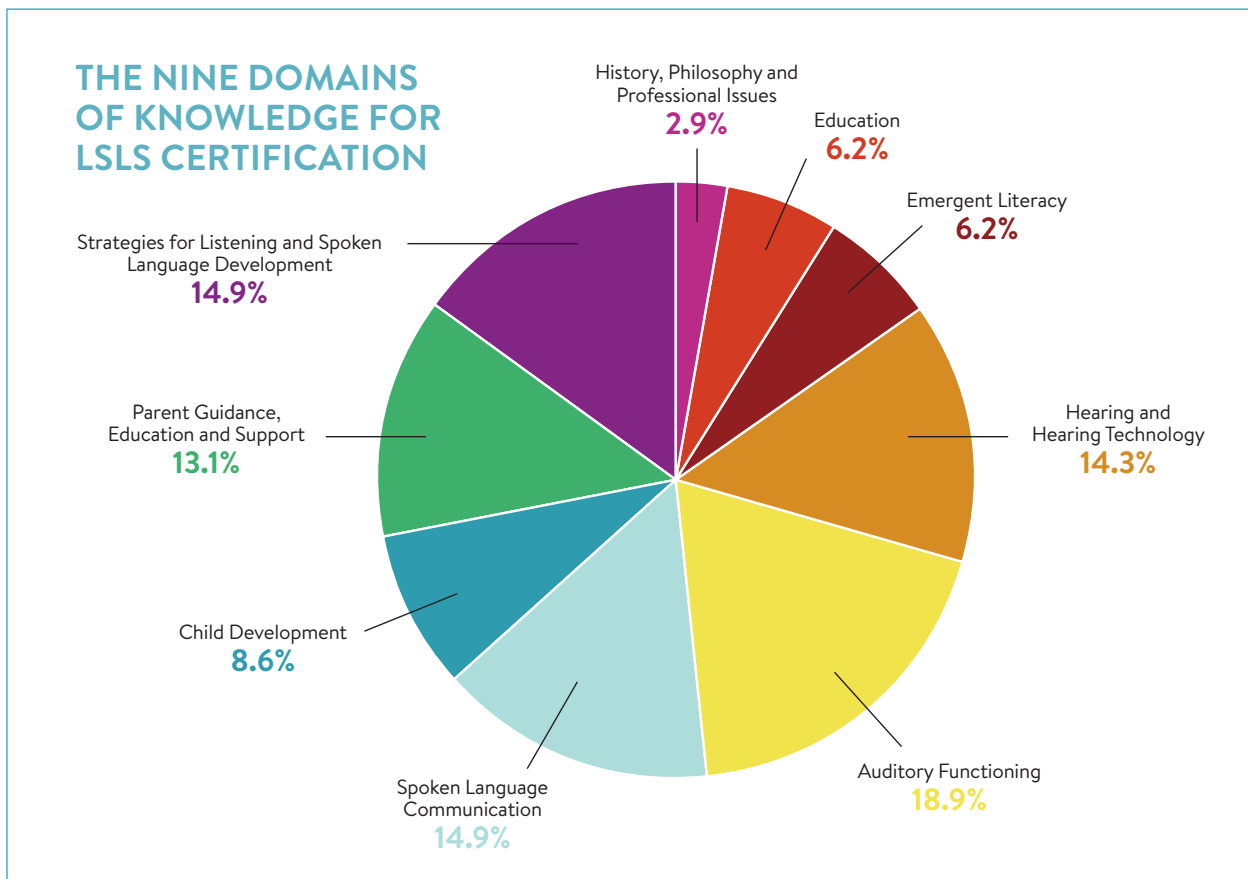
Professionals pursue one of two LSLS designations; either the LSLS Cert. AVT® or the LSLS Cert. AVEd®. These credentials each have a set of Principles to which LSL professionals are expected and agree to adhere to as part of their practice. Professionals typically pursue the designation that is the best fit for the work environment in which they are employed while pursuing LSLS certification. Professionals who are employed in a clinical, medical, or public or private therapy/intervention setting may find pursuit of the LSLS Cert. AVT designation to be the better fit for them. Professionals who are employed in public or private educational/school settings may find pursuit of the LSLS Cert. AVEd designation to be the better fit for them. Regardless of the designation, both the LSLS Cert. AVT and LSLS Cert. AVEd designations indicate competence by the professional in helping children who are deaf and hard of hearing develop LSL.

Q. Where do families and professionals find a certified LSL professional?

A. Currently, more than 1,000 individuals in more than 30 countries are certified LSL professionals. The Academy’s [Locate a Listening and Spoken Language Specialist \(LSLS\) Directory](#) is one way to find a certified LSL professional who provides LSL services. This directory also indicates which professionals offer mentoring services to aspiring LSL professionals. Families seeking a certified LSL professional are not limited to services within their own borders. Many LSL professionals provide services remotely, so children in many countries or in remote areas can receive support. Parents who have a computer or tablet or can receive services from willing, certified LSL professionals located anywhere in the world. Professionals who wish to find a certified LSL professional who can act as their mentor during the LSLS certification process are fortunate that many mentors can provide mentoring from a distance thanks to the use of technology.

Q. What is unique about a certified LSL professional?

A. It is normal for someone to ask, “What is so special about a certified LSL professional?” Can we just say, “The knowledge and skills set are not just aspirational, it’s achievable and enviable when you see it in a professional!” The Academy worked with Kryterion, Inc., to identify a knowledge and skills set known as the LSLS Certification Exam Blueprint. The [LSLS Certification Exam Blueprint](#) is a wonderful resource and guide to what a LSLS Cert. AVT and LSLS Cert. AVEd knows and can put into practice, and is organized by the Nine Domains of Knowledge (see below).



Professionals who pursue LSL certification tend to be highly motivated people who believe in others and are able to guide, encourage, support and stand beside them as they reach towards their own goals. As life-long learners, LSL professionals join a community of other professionals who want to make the world a better place for families with children with hearing loss through their commitment to new knowledge, innovative practices and impactful relationships!

Ten Benefits to the Professional who Earns LSL Certification and Utilizes the Credential

1. **Acknowledgement of competence** due to the specialized knowledge and skills set of LSL and related areas (e.g., parent coaching) by parents and other professionals. A recent Academy survey found that 90% of certified LSL professionals sought certification to improve the services they provided to children and families.
2. Listing of the LSL Cert. AVT or LSL Cert. AVEEd credential following your name helps parents, professionals and society **identify you as a professional who knows how to teach LSL to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.**
3. **Promotion of you as a certified LSL professional** in the “Locate an LSL Directory” on the Academy’s website, which could lead to new opportunities.
4. **New opportunity** for employment or promotion to higher positions.
5. **Possibility of** pay increase (depending on employer), other compensation or **recognition for your exceptional knowledge and skills.**
6. **Personal thrill and pride** of knowing you have succeeded at what you may consider one of your life goals—to reach a high level of happiness and meaning in your work and to know that you and your work impacts and changes the lives of others!
7. **Professional satisfaction** of having achieved one of your long-term professional goals—becoming a certified LSL professional/LSL Cert. AVT/LSL Cert. AVEEd.
8. **Increased opportunity to participate** in your field through invited presentations and appointments to committees, task forces and boards.
9. **Giving back** by becoming a **mentor** to aspiring professionals in the future or contributing **financial support or other supports** to aspiring LSL professionals.
10. **Networking** in the larger professional world through **participation and connection to the worldwide community of certified LSL professionals.**

Q. What is required to successfully earn the LSL certification?

A. Many professionals become a LSL Cert. AVT or LSL Cert. AVEEd once they have gained some professional experience through their work settings. Most professionals do not learn or even hear about LSL during their formal education years. For this reason, most professionals who pursue LSL certification will benefit immeasurably (as will the children and families they serve) by engaging in a mentor-mentee relationship with a professional who is currently a certified LSL professional.

General Information Regarding Initial LSL Certification

Completed and accepted LSL Registry Enrollment application (which requires essential personal and demographic information and provision of documentation related to that professional's education/degrees), one professional letter of reference and a letter of commitment from a certified LSL professional who has agreed to be the candidate's mentor: <https://agbellacademy.org/certification/lsl-registry/>.

Professional university degree (minimum of bachelor's degree or equivalent) that allows a professional to practice in one of the following fields: Audiology, Deaf Education, or Speech-Language Pathology.

Professional license or credential that allows a professional to practice with children and others (if required in that professional's location).

Selection of which designation will be pursued—either LSL Cert. AVT or LSL Cert AVEd—and a signed commitment to the **Principles of the LSL AVT or the LSL AVEd practice** (whichever one has been selected as the designation of pursuit).

Professional continuing education that totals, at least, 80 hours. Forty (40) of these hours can be obtained prior to the beginning of the certification process.

Observation of 10 sessions provided by one or more certified LSL professionals and completion of the Academy's related documentation.

Provision and documentation of direct LSL services with children who are learning to listen and talk and developing LSL as their primary mode of communication. Professionals must provide **900 hours of LSL services** during their certification period (for a minimum of 36 continuous months and up to 72 months). Most of these hours should be with children who are infants, toddlers or preschoolers and whose families are participating in parent coaching. Up to 10 percent of these hours can be with adult clients who are receiving services after obtaining a new cochlear implant or other hearing device(s). Some hours of indirect services (e.g., parent groups, audiology appointments or meetings related to a child) can be counted towards the total number of hours.

Ongoing mentoring during the certification process by one or more certified LSL professionals for a total of 20 LSL sessions led by the candidate. These sessions may be observed either live or via video by a mentor, and feedback must be provided on the Academy's approved form (F-1) for each of the mentored sessions.

A formal, self-written description of the candidate's LSL practice (completed near the end of the 36- to 72-month certification period).

Professional letters of recommendation provided by two (2) professionals familiar with the candidate's work related to direct and/or indirect LSL services.

Parent letters of recommendation from two (2) parents whose children have received direct LSL services from the candidate.

Passing score on the LSL Certification Examination (provided in English and Spanish). The candidate can choose to take the exam, once ready, at any point during the certification process, provided that the candidate has applied and been accepted into the LSL Registry.

Q. Is there a continuing professional education requirement that certified LSL professionals must meet?

A. Certified LSL professionals are nearly always highly motivated professionals who engage in ongoing education as a way to provide excellent LSL and other services. Once certified, a professional is required to participate in 15 hours of Academy-approved hours and provide evidence of completion of those continuing education units (CEUs) every two years. A course or activity that is Academy-approved for LSLS CEUs must have content that is related to one or more of the **[Nine LSLS Domains of Knowledge](#)**.

Professionals and organizations who are interested in becoming an LSLS CEU Provider so that they may offer LSLS CEUs can find information on the Academy's website: **<https://agbellacademy.org/continuing-education/for-ceu-providers/>**.

Q. Is there someone I can talk with about LSLS certification, certification renewal or LSLS continuing education?

A. If a professional is unable to find the information they need on the **[Academy's website](#)**, they should reach out to the Academy by email at **academy@agbell.org** (English) or **academia@agbell.org** (Spanish). The Academy has a small staff who works first through email to respond to questions, resolve issues and provide guidance. If email proves to be ineffective and a question or issue is unresolved, individuals are encouraged to request a WhatsApp call or Zoom meeting that can be conducted in English or Spanish.

