

#2618

1/7/08

RECEIVED

Mr. Kim Kaufman, Executive Director  
Independent Regulatory Review Commission  
333 Market Street, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

2008 JAN 11 AM 9:06

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

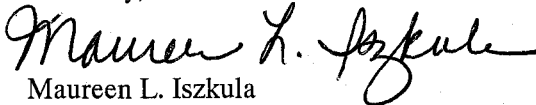
Dear Mr. Kaufman,

I am writing to you today about the importance of a reasonable caseload for public school-based speech and language therapists in Pennsylvania. I have been a school based speech and language therapist in the Millcreek Township School District since 1977. During my employment, I have worked with students with many different speech and language impairments with varying levels of severity. During my years of service, I have noticed a trend that is making my job much more difficult. The incidence of students with severe communication deficits is increasing yearly. This is mainly due to the increased incidence of autism and these students' inclusion in the regular education classroom and neighborhood schools. These students require significant, intensive therapy and require much more time and intervention than the majority of identified speech/language students did in the past. Augmentative communication devices are now common place in public schools today and are also extremely time intensive. The identified students today are moderate to severe and require multiple sessions per week of therapy. Yet, the maximum caseload remains the same and only reflects students, with no regard for amount of service each student requires. I am fortunate and work in a school with a caseload of about 55 and this is difficult. I see my colleagues with caseloads of 65 struggling even more. This trend of inclusion will continue to impact public school service and our program standards need to change also to reflect it.

I am writing today to encourage you to consider a recommendation of revising the caseload size for Pennsylvania's school-based speech and language therapists. The American Speech/Language/Hearing Association (ASHA) recommends a caseload of 40. The caseload number for speech and language therapists who service early intervention students in Pennsylvania is 50. Please consider a caseload maximum of 50 for school-based speech/language programs that provide DIRECT intervention to school aged children to help them meet the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Listening and Speaking.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,



Maureen L. Iszkula  
Speech and Language Therapist  
Grandview Elementary School  
4301 Lancaster Rd.  
Erie, PA 16506  
(814)836-6320