



Top Five Lessons Learned in My First Year as a New Professional

By Bridget Shanahan

I've wanted to be an audiologist since I was a kid. I recall an art project in elementary school to draw a picture of what you wanted to be when you grow up. My classmates were drawing themselves as ballerinas in tu-tus and as movie stars living in Hollywood; I drew myself in a white coat with otoscope in hand.

Last year at graduation, I felt overwhelmed and excited to finally consider myself a practicing audiologist. Now, one year later, I wanted to share the top-five lessons learned in my first year as a new professional with new graduates who will be transitioning from student to clinician.

1 Find a Role That Supports Your Passion

I work as an educational audiologist in a very large school district. I'm beyond thrilled to work with a supportive team of audiologists who enhance my passion for pediatrics and push for the best opportunities for our patients. It's rather easy to find any job in audiology, but it's vitally important to find a position that supports your skills, encourages growth, and fosters a positive learning environment.

“There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.”

—
Nelson Mandela

2 Tracking Continuing Education Credits

Managing my newly earned continuing education credits has been rather daunting. I was uncertain what information was needed for licensure and certification requirements. The Academy has a CEU registry that stores a record of completed education courses and

certifications (www.audiology.org/professional-development/continuing-education/ce-registry). Academy members can access their CEU registry for free by logging into their profile. For those who are not members, the CEU registry costs only \$60 annually. This has been a great resource for tracking my credits and the transcript can be submitted for state licensure.

3 Perfect Your Counseling Skills

In my clinic, we regularly identify a late onset hearing loss in children or evaluate known hearing loss where families did not follow through on previous amplification recommendations. I have found myself changing my counseling style many times over the past few months to better emphasize and convey the educational impact of untreated hearing loss.

I will have in-depth discussions with my co-workers and observe their counseling style during appointments to enhance further my techniques and strategies. It has been a different approach in comparison to the externship year, as I want to maintain best practice standards and offer the best service I can to every family. The Academy is a great resource and offers many counseling tools, such as an audiogram of familiar sounds, hearing aid satisfaction surveys, and ear anatomy posters (www.audiology.org/publications-resources/brochures).

In the past few months, I've provided parents with many resources and handouts regarding their child's hearing loss and its educational impact. I also have been able to provide families with tools they need to

follow through with successful use of amplification.

4 Use Your Resources

Nowadays, families rely on the Google search engine more than their own hearing specialists. I've found myself telling patients, "if you are going to Google this hearing loss, please use these websites."

I frequently reach out to organizations such as Hands & Voices, A.G. Bell, State Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program, nearby audiology and speech-therapy clinics, and parents who formed support groups to learn about programs and upcoming events. I enjoy acting as liaison for my patients to the hearing-impaired community. I encourage new professionals to reach out to local and national organizations and learn about available programs, so that these resources can be passed on to patients.

5 Be Active in Our Professional Community

This has been my most valuable lesson. In the past year, I've come across unique and interesting patient cases that needed an outside opinion or referral from other professionals. I've talked with colleagues about office management and gained new insight and perspectives. I've asked for career advice from experienced audiologists and was grateful for their tips and suggestions.

We audiologists are all on the same team, regardless of where we work. I recommend that new professionals join audiology organizations, attend state or national conferences,

or participate in community discussions or Facebook groups. Of course, please remember to be cognizant of the need to maintain patient privacy and follow HIPAA regulations when soliciting feedback.

Network with professionals in your state or across the country to build your own professional connections. So far, many of my best memories are collaborating with other audiologists at the national level. Get involved and stay involved.

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