Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences

Indiana University

Speech Therapy Education, Practicum, and Services for Latino Children and Families (STEPS) Program Handbook

2026-2027

This Handbook (hereinafter referred to as the STEPS Handbook) is intended to provide all SLP master's degree students in the STEPS program, or those interested in participating in any of its components, with basic information about the academic, clinical practicum, and scholarship aspects of the program. Read it carefully and see a STEPS advisor (Clinical Assistant Professor Andrea Arends, Dr. Carol Mesa, Clinical Associate Professor Erin Peabody, Clinical Associate Professor Dr. Rachel Karem, Clinical Assistant Professor Dr. Lucia Corvalan) if you have any questions about any part of what is written here. This handbook supplements, but does not supersede, the degree requirements found in the Master's in SLP Student Handbook and the Graduate School Bulletin. You should have a copy of the Bulletin and Master's in SLP Student Handbook (both are available online), and you are expected to be familiar with their contents. The STEPS Handbook contains requirements and policies in effect as of August 2026.

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ABOUT STEPS

The Speech Therapy Education, Practicum, and Services for Latino Children and Families (STEPS) program is a multidimensional training program, to prepare qualified students to provide appropriate speech-language services to young Latinos and their families through:

- research-based academic training, including courses that focus on serving Latino children and families
- clinical/field experiences with Latino children and families to foster a multicultural perspective and the application of evidence-based practices
- service learning within these academic and clinical training requirements to prepare students in the area of advocacy and community partnerships.

The program is an optional track in the Indiana University Master's program in Speech-Language Pathology. Students participating in STEPS must also meet all requirements of the M.A. program.

STEPS PERSONNEL

Core Leadership- Faculty & Clinical Supervisors:

- Professor Andrea Arends (aarends@iu.edu)
- Dr. Rachel Karem (rwkarem@iu.edu)
- Dr. Carol Mesa (cmesa@iu.edu)
- Professor Erin Peabody (ecolone@iu.edu)
- Dr. Lucia Corvalan (lcorvala@iu.edu)

WHO MAY PARTICIPATE IN STEPS

There are two levels of participation in STEPS:

1. Students who are interested in comprehensive training to work ethically as a bilingual speech-language pathologist.
2. Students who wish to participate *only* in select academic, clinical, and/or service experiences with the Latino population

The requirements described in this handbook pertain primarily to students in category (1). However, the academic, practicum, and service opportunities are available to students in category (2) provided they meet certain prerequisites. These prerequisites will be described below in their respective sections.

Full participation in STEPS in category (1) requires the student to be sufficiently fluent in Spanish so as to participate adequately in Spanish-language clinical practicum, and to practice ethically as a bilingual SLP. Fluency will be judged via a phone/zoom or in-person interview in Spanish. The interviewer may use the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages proficiency guidelines to judge speaking fluency. A rating of Advanced Low or higher in the Speaking area of proficiency is adequate for participation in STEPS. This translates to an overall minimum rating of **4** on a **5-**point scale established to evaluate oral Spanish fluency. It is expected that grammatical and phonological skills be in the near-native proficiency range which is 4 and higher. See Appendix I for the rating scale and scoring criteria. Students will also have some written competence in Spanish, although this will not limit their participation in STEPS. Students who would still like to participate in the STEPS program but may have lower Spanish proficiency have the opportunity to re-take their Spanish proficiency assessment to meet the criteria. If they did not initially pass the proficiency assessment but still want to complete their STEPS certification, these students have to enroll in the mandatory classes during the Fall I semester and apply for their Spanish proficiency to be assessed again during the week of final exams in December (i.e., during Fall I semester). This pathway is offered so that students have a mechanism and allotted time to improve their Spanish proficiency and meet the requirements to receive a letter of completion certifying their participation in the STEPS program.

Partial participation in STEPS in category (2) is for students wishing to complete a clinical practicum with Spanish-English speaking children and their families, but do not wish to complete all requirements of the STEPS program. A near-native Spanish proficiency level is required for students in Category 2 to ensure effective communication with bilingual Spanish-English-speaking children and their families. Students under this category do not receive a letter of completion certifying their participation in the STEPS program.

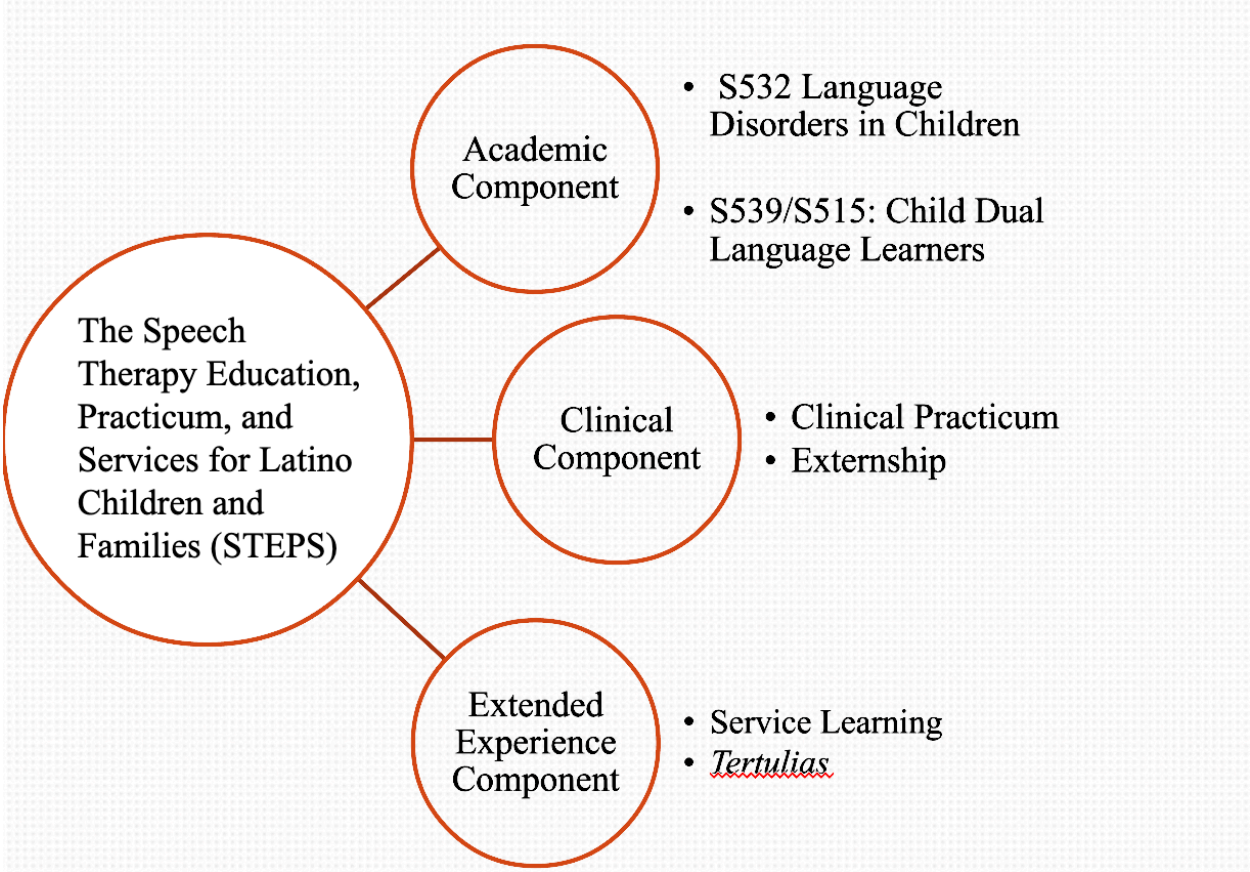
Importantly, adjustments to class materials, content, or schedules may be made as needed, allowing the program to remain responsive to current best practices, departmental strengths, and student requirements.

STEPS TRAINING COMPONENTS

Students enrolled in the STEPS program will fulfill American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) academic requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) in Speech-Language Pathology, as part of the Master's program. Please see the Master's in SLP Student Handbook for more information about general requirements for the CCC. Through STEPS, students are not only prepared but equipped to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those they serve. STEPS takes a comprehensive approach to train future bilingual SLPs through three components that are represented in the figure below.

Figure 1.

STEPS Training Components



ACADEMIC COMPONENT

Because of the STEPS program's unique dual focus on preparing clinicians to work with Latino children and families, STEPS participants will be *required* to take coursework necessary for that will help the student gain the necessary background knowledge to practice as a culturally competent/humble Spanish-English bilingual speech-language pathologist.

Required courses for fall 2026 are:

- S532 Language Disorders in Children
- *Tertulias*

The anticipated courses for Spring 2027 are

- S539: Child Dual Language Learners
- *Tertulias*

In addition, the STEPS students are encouraged to audit the S515 Spanish Language Acquisition Class in Fall 2027. The goal is to offer additional opportunities to consolidate knowledge and skills relevant to the training of bilingual clinicians in STEPS.

Please note that there may be additional requirements for licensure as a speech-language pathologist in different states. Refer to the Master's in SLP Student Handbook and the Medical Externship Coordinator, Carrie Wade, for more details.

STEPS courses are open to any student in the Master's in SLP program (i.e., general curriculum) and those who desire a certificate indicating completion of the STEPS program must take all of the academic courses outlined. Please see a STEPS advisor with any questions on coursework

CLINICAL PRACTICUM COMPONENT

Requirements. Students participating in STEPS under category (1), as described above under "Who May Participate in STEPS", are required to complete certain clinical practicum requirements with Latinx/Latine comunity. These practicum opportunities will also satisfy the clinical requirements of the Master's in SLP program. The STEPS clinical practicum requirements include the following:

- Clinical practicum with Latine and/or Spanish/English bilingual clients prior to externships, which include both diagnostic and intervention placements

- Clinical assignment with STEPS bilingual supervisor(s) for at least 1-2 semesters in the IU clinic or at Indianapolis Public Schools while on campus

Description. The hours of clinical practicum with Latine and/or Spanish/English bilingual clients may take place in the Department's Speech-Language Clinic and off-site in local schools or other entities. The STEPS personnel will track each participant's number of bilingual practicum hours. **Students will be required to inform the STEPS Core Leadership Team, at the end of each semester, of the number of hours accrued during the STEPS clinical assignment.** Expected off-site clinical practicum sites include public schools in Indianapolis and Monroe County, as well as community locations throughout the region. These practicum experiences may consist of speech-language screenings, evaluations, or therapy with preschool, elementary, middle, or high school-aged children. Please note that background checks may be required for participation in practicum assignments off-campus, as specified by each facility. Students will be notified of such requirements as soon as possible after the practicum assignment has been made. Students will have at least 1-2 clinical placements with bilingual clients prior to externrnship.

All students participating in STEPS will also be given clinical assignments in the Department Clinic and will participate in therapy and evaluations in English, as all Master's students do. The hours with Latine students required as part of STEPS, as well as the practicum hours accrued while on externship, count toward fulfilling Master's degree and ASHA requirements as specified in the Master's in SLP Student Handbook, especially in the area of assessment and intervention with children (speech and language). Thus, the STEPS clinical hours represent a subset of the total clinical practicum hours expected of Master's students, rather than an additional set of obligations. Public school externships are described in detail below under the "Externships" heading.

Priority for Assignments

Priority for clinical practicum assignments with Latine clients will be given to students planning on completing STEPS requirements who have the necessary Spanish language proficiency. Students who wish to be assigned to clinical practicum and are planning on completing all STEPS requirements are those who indicated during the admissions process, that they accepted

admission to the STEPS program. Other students not planning on completing the STEPS program, should request interest in working with the bilingual Spanish-English clientele by indicating it on the Student Information Sheet filled out at the conclusion of every semester, *and* by contacting one of the STEPS clinical supervisors, before the semester in which participation in the practicum is desired. As mentioned previously, near-native Spanish proficiency is required for said placement.

Eligibility for STEPS Practicum

To provide the highest level of service to our Latine pediatric clients, students completing clinical practicum with this population must possess certain background knowledge regarding their linguistic environments and experiences. Therefore, students will be assigned to STEPS practicum experiences consisting of speech-language *evaluations* and *therapy* following completion of, or with concurrent enrollment in, S532 and participation in the ***Tertulias*** during Fall 2026. To continue with STEPS clinical practica, students must complete the course requirements, S532, and participate in the ***Tertulias*** during Fall and Spring semesters.
If the student falls into category (2) and wants to complete a clinical practicum in Spanish, a near-native Spanish proficiency level continues to be required for Category 2 students to ensure effective communication with bilingual Spanish-English speaking children and their families.

Externships: As described in the Master's in SLP Handbook, clinical externships at two different sites (medical -based and school -based settings) are required for the clinical M.A. degree. Externships will be arranged by the Medical Externship Coordinator for MA students, Professor Carrie Wade, and School Externship Coordinator for MA students, Professor Brooke Burke. For your school-based externship, you may have the opportunity to work with a bilingual population. If this is of interest to you, you may work with Professor Burke to determine the availability of such an option during your externship period.

School Placement Options

The STEPS team has relationships with several school corporations throughout the state of Indiana in need of Spanish-speaking SLPs to serve their Latinx students and families. Although students may elect a school corporation of their choosing in which to complete the practicum,

they may consider completing an externship in a school with a bilingual population. If this is of interest, the student seeking this externship experience should obtain information concerning the demographics not only of the intended school district but also of the school where s/he/they will wish to complete their school externship. Every effort will be made to secure this placement site in the region of the student's preference. However, this cannot be guaranteed.

Documentation

Students will comply with all rules and regulations set forth by the School of Education and the Indiana Department of Education for school clinician licensing. This includes specific paperwork requirements to be discussed by the externship coordinator. Students are to report the number of clinical hours completed with Latinx children/clients and the number of Latinx clients served at both school and medical externships.

All STEPS students in category (1) will have records in their department files indicating their progress toward satisfaction of the academic course requirements, grades, clinical practicum hours with Latino clients, and service-learning activities.

Medical externship

Students pursuing the bilingual track – STEPS – will not be required to secure a medical setting that serves the Latine population. Nevertheless, the STEPS program will provide information as to potential sites where there is the opportunity to work with said population.

EXTENDED EXPERIENCE COMPONENT

In addition to the academic coursework and clinical practicum experiences, a *service-learning* requirement for STEPS students constitutes an important and meaningful way to gain experiences with and an understanding of the issues facing Indiana's (and the nation's) Latine children and families. It is anticipated that students will participate in service-learning activities prior to externships like school-based enrichment programs, participation in research activities, and development of community-based tools (e.g., family education; classroom materials). Service-learning experiences include but are not limited to: (a) participation in La Fiesta del Otoño, Latino Family Night, International Family Night, (b) developing podcasts/videos for families, participating in the Hola Bloomington! Radio program to discuss a topic related to child

dual language learners and/or communication disorders, (c) writing a brief informational column for the local *Boletín Comunitario,* (d) providing intervention activities for children and families enrolled in *La Escuelita*, which is a program led by the Centro Communal in Bloomington, and (e) participating in service opportunities with core faculty in the school-based community setting. The specific activities will also depend on the identified needs within the community and at schools. The service-learning requirement can be of direct contact with the community or via the development of materials to support communication with and advanc knowledge in our target community.

Other service-learning requirements

Other potential service learning will be made available to the students, where they can choose to volunteer in these endeavors (i.e., health fair information booths, community activities, health screenings, information to the community). The STEPS Core Leadership Team will inform students of any upcoming events in which they may want to volunteer. Students in category (1) should aim to participate in one of these activities during their 4 semesters on campus. They have to complete at least **15 hours of service learning before leaving for externships**. Students will keep track of their hours and write a one-page long reflection (single-space) about their experience. The reflection will be submitted via the CANVAS site for ***Tertulias.***

Tertulias

As indicated under the Academic Component, STEPS students are ***required*** to participate in a bi-monthly or monthly clinical grand rounds called *Tertulias*. Tertulias are informal meetings whose purpose is to discuss, engage, or participate more deeply in knowledge, topics, or aspects related to working with linguistically and culturally diverse populations. Different themes and main areas of discussion will be covered each semester. These meetings will occur every other week or every month (depending on the semester of training) and may include STEPS alum, first-year STEPS students, second-year STEPS students, as well as students from other universities with whom the program has established a working relationship (e.g., University of Puerto Rico). Students in the regular master's program are welcome to participate, as well as clinical and academic faculty. The topics will focus on our work as bilingual speech-language pathologists and will be identified by

current students, alumni, and STEPS core faculty (Arends, Karem, Mesa, Corvalan & Peabody). The main themes are the following:

Semester	**Theme/Main Topic (varies depending on student interest and need)**
Fall I	Overview of Spanish grammar & phonology - Phonological, Morphological, Syntactical and Semantical Vocabulary - Dialectal Variation
Spring	Bilingual Assessment
Summer	Treatment/Clinical Skills – Special Topics - **This content can be flexible and be responsive to the students' needs*
Fall II	Responsive and Ethical Practice Discussion with bilingual SLPs/alum

A *Canvas* site will be available for students to access materials for the *Tertulias*. The times and dates for the *Tertulias* will be established once the semester begins and academic and clinical responsibilities have been established for the students. If a specific topic or guest speaker would benefit students in the general M.A. program, as well as academic and clinical faculty, they may be invited to participate in *Tertulias.*

During the Fall I, Spring I, and Fall II semesters, all STEPS students are required to participate in our discussion/brown bag sessions. These may also take place, as clinic group meetings, during the summer term, twice monthly.

Who May Participate in STEPS Service-Learning Activities

Service-learning opportunities are open to both students in the regular Master's program and students in the Master's program who are completing STEPS.

Schedule for the Current Academic Year

This is the tentative sequence for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Fall 1	Spring 1	Summer	Fall 2	Spring 2
S532 Language Disorders in Children ***Tertulias***	S539: Child Dual Language Learners ***Tertulias***	No required courses specific to STEPS (***Tertulias*** may be included)	***Tertulias***	Externship (school externship requires working in a school with at 20% Latine population)

LETTER OF COMPLETION OF STEPS

Students who complete *all* STEPS requirements outlined in this Handbook will receive a letter of completion of the STEPS program upon graduation. This letter will be on Indiana University letterhead and signed by the Director of STEPS. Students will be e-mailed the letter of completion, and a copy will also be placed in his/her/their departmental file. For a sample letter, please see the Appendix.

This letter of STEPS completion is designed for use with employers or licensing agencies requesting proof of coursework and/or practicum experiences focusing on bilingualism and the Latinx community. *Please note* that currently, ASHA does not offer a bilingual SLP specialty certificate. The State of Indiana does not have a separate licensure for bilingual SLPs. Students are encouraged to check with other states in which they wish to work to determine their licensure and certification requirements.

MENTORS

To ensure student success in the STEPS program, in August of the students' first year in the M.A. program, STEPS students will be assigned a faculty mentor. This mentor will be one of the STEPS Academic Advisors. Students and mentors will meet at least once per semester. Failure to participate in mentoring meetings may result in withholding of the STEPS completion letter upon graduation.

In addition, students will be paired with a fellow STEPS student to serve as a peer mentor. This pairing will occur when students begin STEPS clinical practicum. During their first year in the program, STEPS students will take the role of mentee. During their second year in the program, students will serve as mentors. This is part of the general M.A. in SLP program mentorship requirements. STEPS students will be paired with other STEPS students to the extent possible. Mentees and mentors are encouraged to meet once per semester, or as needs arise. Topics for mentees and mentors to discuss will be provided at the beginning of the school year in the M.A. Handbook.

BILINGUAL SPEECH-LANGUAGE RESOURCES

The following are speech-language resources that may be of interest to bilingual clinicians.

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Special Interest Division 14 Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations (https://www.asha.org/SIG/14/)
- ASHA Hispanic Caucus (https://www.hispaniccaucusasha.org/)
- ASHA Office of Multicultural Affairs and resources (https://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/)
- Indiana Department of Education Office of English Language Learning and Migrant Education (https://www.in.gov/doe/)
- Bilingual Therapies (https://www.bilingualtherapies.com/)
- 2 Languages 2 Worlds blog about bilingualism by Dr. Elizabeth Peña, Dr. Brian Goldstein, and Dr. Swathi Kiran (http://2languages2worlds.wordpress.com/)
- International Children's Digital Library (http://en.childrenslibrary.org/)
- Colorín/Colorado – A bilingual site for educators and families of English Language Learners (https://www.colorincolorado.org/)

RESOURCES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

- La Casa – Latino Cultural Center (https://lacasa.indiana.edu/)
- Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs (https://diversity.iu.edu/?_ga=2.22610427.1701382527.1594551407-1780452897.1438456721)
- College of Arts and Sciences – Diversity and Inclusion (https://college.indiana.edu/about/diversity-inclusion/index.html)
- Writing Tutorial Services (https://wts.indiana.edu/)
- Academic Support Center (https://academicsupport.indiana.edu/resources/nso-virtual-resource-center/index.html)
- Crimson Cupboard Food Pantry (https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-support/crimson-cupboard/index.html)
- Disability Services (https://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/student-support/disability-services/index.html)

APPENDIX I: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW RATING SCALE

Applicant name_____ Date_____

Evaluator's name_____

Spanish oral skills assessment

Guide for Likert-type scale – 5 = native-like skills, 1 = poor skills

Circle appropriate number on likert scale for each area (See guidelines attached)

A. Comprehension

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

B. Vocabulary

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

C. Grammar

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

D. Pronunciation

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

E. Fluency

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

F. Content

1 2 3 4 5

G. Based on responses to questions, applicant demonstrated clear goal of working with target population.

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

General impression/score

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Scoring Rubric:

A. Comprehension

1- Applicant had a difficult time answering questions posed. Responses did not correspond to what was asked. Most questions had to be repeated or re-phrased.

2- Some difficulty with comprehension. Applicant, while s/he/they was able to reply to some of the questions, it was often the case that repetition or re-phrasing was necessary.

3- Intermediate level of comprehension. Can follow discussion on most occasions, but requires repetition/re-phrasing at times.

4- Good comprehension. Responds appropriately to the questions and requires little repetition/re-phrasing. Can follow conversational exchange with minimal difficulty.

5- Excellent comprehension, native like abilities. Follows conversation and responds appropriately to all questions posed.

B. Vocabulary

1- very limited vocabulary; frequent use of English or invented words; vocabulary difficulties limits interaction.

2- limited vocabulary; although speaks in Spanish, vocabulary is limited to common and frequent words and tends to use English or invented words, including false cognates.

3- Moderate-size vocabulary; some use of English or invented words, including false cognates.

4- Good variety of vocabulary with mostly appropriate word use; English used (if at all) only for 1 or 2 words or to stress a point.

5- Impressive vocabulary (variety and accuracy); no use of English.

C. Grammar

1- Little to no control of basic grammatical structures. Frequent errors and limited use of complex sentence forms and morphemes. Errors dominate.

2- Some correct use of structures, but these are very basic. Limited use of more complex forms/morphological markers. Errors frequent and affect comprehension/intelligibility.

3- Mostly appropriate use of basic structures, but errors are frequent, both morphological and syntactical. Use of more complex sentence structures and morphological markers, but errors are noted even in more simple forms.

4- Good use of Spanish grammar, and use of a variety of sentence types. Some errors present in the use of more advanced morphological markers or SLA typical errors (e.g., subjunctive, sentence embedding, grammatical gender).

5- Native like grammatical skill. No errors noted (if noted, typical of any interaction).

D. Pronunciation

1- pronunciation and stress is poor; significant impact on intelligibility.

2- pronunciation not his/her strong point; although intelligible, it distracts from the content of the conversation/interaction.

3- generally good pronunciation and stress, but some striking non-Spanish sounds; fails to evidence use of certain Spanish sounds (e.g. trill, flap)

4- generally good pronunciation and stress; if some English phonemes used, these were not common or distracting

5- native-like stress and pronunciation

E. Fluency

1- poor; speech frequently hesitant and jerky; significant use of mazes, interjections, and pauses during the conversation; sentences may be left uncompleted

2- fair, though many pauses and hesitations noted as well as interjections

3- some stumbling over words and phrases and some use of mazes, hesitations, pauses, and interjections, but is able to re-phrase and continue; limited impact on intelligibility

4- speech generally natural and continuous; only a few mazes, hesitations, pauses and/or interjections.

5- native like fluency

F. Content

1- little information provided; very superficial; does not expand or provide additional information; some responses inappropriate or irrelevant; mainly uses phrases or simple sentences to respond.

2- superficial information, no further description/insight or expansion on responses to questions. Uses simple sentences to respond.

3- Adequate information provided, with some expansion in responses; not much development of ideas.

4- Provides relevant information and develops ideas, but performance is not consistent across the interview

5- Relevant and original information; ideas developed via multiple sentences; consistent performance across the interview.

G. Interest in working with target population (Latinx community)

1- No interest in working with the community noted during the responses made in the interview.

2- Some interest stated, but more general to the bilingual/diverse population and or interest mainly in the adult population.

3- Responses show interest in working with the bilingual child population, but not as a career goal.

4- Candidate indicates strong interest in working with the Latinx population, but unclear as to clinical context.

5- Candidate, throughout the interview and responses made demonstrate a clear career goal of working with marginalized communities, specifically with Latinx families, with a focus on children.

H. General impression/score

1- poor skills overall

2- fair skills overall

3- good/intermediate level skills overall

4- very good/low advanced skills

5- native like/advanced skills

APPENDIX II: STEPS LETTER OF COMPLETION

To Whom It May Concern

This letter certifies that STUDENT NAME received training and coursework in bilingualism through their participation in the Speech Therapy Education, Practicum, and Services for Latino Children and Families (STEPS) program, as part of their master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology from Indiana University. STEPS is designed to train clinicians to understand language development in bilingual speakers, how to provide services to bilingual speakers, differences between speech and language disorders and bilingualism, culturally and linguistically responsive practice, and advocacy, among other relevant topics. This is a highly regarded bilingual program, identified as a Bright Spot in Hispanic Education by the White House in 2015. As defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, for SLPs to present themselves as bilingual practitioner, they must first have mastered the following areas of competency:

- Native or near-native proficiency in another language in the areas of vocabulary, word-meaning, phonology, grammar, and pragmatics.
- Knowledge of typical language development for both monolingual and bilingual speakers of the language.
- The ability to administer and interpret diagnostics in another language and distinguish between a language difference and a disorder.
- The ability to provide treatment in another language.
- The ability to recognize cultural factors that may impact services.

STUDENT NAME completed coursework about bilingual language development with an emphasis on Spanish development in the context of the U.S., Bilingual Assessment and Intervention, and a variety of topics related to working ethically as a bilingual speech-language pathologist via established bi-monthly academic discussions and service learning. In terms of clinical practice, as part of the STEPS program, STUDENT NAME also completed clinical practicum placements in the university clinic and community with Latino clients, including opportunities for providing services in Spanish.

After completing the STEPS program and the master's degree, STUDENT NAME is well qualified to serve ethically as a bilingual Spanish-English speech-language pathologist.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact:

Andrea Arends	**Dr. Lucia Corvalan**	**Dr. Rachel Karem**	**Dr. Carol Mesa**	**Erin Peabody**
Clinical Assistant Professor	Clinical Assistant Professor	Clinical Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Clinical Associate Professor
aarends@iu.edu	lcorvala@iu.edu	rwkarem@iu.edu	cmesa@iu.edu	ecolone@iu.edu

Sincerely,

STEPS Core Faculty Members
Speech Therapy Education, Practicum, and Services for Latino Children and Families
Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences
Indiana University Bloomington