



January 13, 2021

OFFICIAL STATEMENT FROM SPEECH-LANGUAGE & AUDIOLOGY CANADA (SAC)

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) Official Statement on Vaccination Against COVID-19

SAC calls on the federal, provincial and territorial governments to ensure that speech-language pathologists (S-LPs), audiologists and communication health assistants are recognized as high-risk frontline workers requiring priority vaccination against COVID-19.

Immunization against COVID-19 has commenced with high-risk populations including front-line healthcare workers. As integral members of interprofessional teams providing front-line services in healthcare, education and community settings during the COVID-19 pandemic, S-LPs, audiologists and communication health assistants must be prioritized to receive vaccination against COVID-19.

S-LPs, audiologists and communication health assistants are at increased risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 when providing essential frontline health and education services (SAC, 2020 a, b). Communication health professionals often work in close proximity to their patients and clients for extended periods of time. Some people with communication and hearing challenges have trouble applying personal strategies such as physical distancing and the use of non-medical cloth masks.

Professionals working in healthcare settings may be exposed to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 on a daily basis. In some regions, S-LPs, audiologists and communication health assistants are redeployed to perform high-risk tasks including COVID-19 screening and swabbing. In addition, a number of speech-language pathology and audiology procedures are associated with increased risk exposure to respiratory droplets and aerosols, which have the potential to spread COVID-19 (Bolton et al., 2020; Frazier et al., 2020, Namasivayam-MacDonald & Riquelme, 2020). S-LPs face increased risk when they work alongside physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists in the care of ventilated patients, tracheostomy and laryngectomy patients in intensive care units until their discharge from hospital (Freeman-Sanderson et al., 2020).

Ensuring priority vaccination of S-LPs, audiologists and communication health assistants will allow for the safe provision of essential speech-language pathology and audiology services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

References

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This SAC Official Statement has been developed based on the best available evidence in the context of a rapidly evolving health care emergency and is subject to change as additional information becomes available.

About SAC

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) is a member-driven organization that supports and promotes the professions of more than 6,500 members and associates. We are the only national organization passionately supporting and representing speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants inclusively. Through this support, we champion the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit www.sac-oac.ca to learn more.



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