



Scope of Practice for Audiology

Speech-Language and Audiology Canada

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This document defines and describes the scope of practice for the profession of audiology in Canada, highlighting the broad range of activities and services audiologists perform and provide. It is an informational resource for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, other health-care professionals, regulatory bodies, government agencies, third-party insurers, educators, consumers and the general public.

Audiology is a dynamic and changing profession. Practice activities that are related to emerging clinical, technological and scientific developments are not precluded from consideration as part of the scope of practice of an audiologist and such innovations and advances will result in periodic revision of this document.

It is recognized that audiologists may limit their practice by age, type of disorder or interest. This scope of practice document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of activities. Audiologists are ethically bound to provide services that are consistent with their competence, education and experience.

Audiologists working in regulated provinces and territories must meet regulatory requirements to practice. This scope of practice document does not supersede existing regulations of provincial or territorial regulatory bodies, nor should it affect the interpretation or implementation of such regulations.

DEFINITION

Audiologists are hearing health professionals who identify, diagnose and manage individuals with peripheral or central hearing loss, tinnitus, vestibular and balance disorders and other communication disorders across the lifespan.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A master's degree in audiology (or equivalent) is required for current entry to practice in all jurisdictions in Canada.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Audiologists may practice independently or within an interprofessional framework, collaborating with other professionals such as speech-language pathologists, physicians (e.g., pediatricians, ear-nose-throat specialists and geneticists), nurses, educators, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, child care staff and social workers, as well as communication health assistants. Audiologists provide a broad range of clinical and other professional services.

Clinical Services

- Assessment of hearing, vestibular function and balance, which may involve screening, identification, evaluation, diagnosis and counselling.
- Intervention for hearing, vestibular and balance disorders, which may involve promotion, prevention, counselling, treatment, consultation, management, (re)habilitation and education.
- Measurement of patient or client outcomes for these services.
- Consultation with and referral to other professionals.
- Clinical areas of service may include, but are not limited to:
 - hearing disorders involving both peripheral and central pathways of hearing;
 - auditory processing disorders;
 - tinnitus, hyperacusis and misophonia;
 - vestibular and balance dysfunction;

and the impacts of these conditions on everyday life.

- Assessment, selection, prescribing/recommending, dispensing, validation, verification, servicing and development of hearing aids and other appropriate hearing assistive and (re)habilitative strategies for individuals with hearing impairment, auditory processing, balance dysfunction, tinnitus and/or related disorders. This could include cochlear implants, other implantable hearing devices, assistive technology such as FM systems, speech reading classes, tinnitus re-training and vestibular (re)habilitation as well as measurement of patient or client outcomes for these technologies and strategies.
- Intraoperative monitoring and assessment of cranial nerve function (e.g. auditory and facial nerve function).
- Providing aural (re)habilitation to improve listening and communication skills.
- Cerumen management.
- Screening for speech and language development for the purpose of hearing evaluation and/or the identification of individuals with other communication disorders who may require intervention, and referral to speech-language pathologists, educators and other health and/or school-based professionals when appropriate.

Prevention, Promotion and Advocacy

- Prevention, counselling and education services to patients or clients, families, caregivers, other professionals and the public regarding all aspects of hearing and balance function.
- Promotion of optimal hearing and communication health, hearing loss prevention and hearing conservation.
- Promotion of the profession of audiology.

- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with auditory disorders, balance disorders and other related disorders and populations that are at risk.
- Advocacy for the profession of audiology.

Education and Research

- Education, mentoring and training of communication health assistants, students, and other professionals.
- University and/or college education and training pertaining to hearing, vestibular, balance and other related disorders.
- Research in hearing, vestibular function, balance and other related areas.

Administration

- Management and supervision of staff, students and communication health assistants.
- Development, implementation and evaluation of programs (e.g., newborn hearing screening, school hearing, industrial screening and conservation), policies, guidelines and standards.
- Maintenance of competency and quality improvement.
- Case management and coordination of service delivery.

Other Roles and Responsibilities

- Assessment and management of educational, workplace and other environments.
- Consultation with government, industry and community.
- Consultation with worker's compensation boards, Veterans Affairs Canada and other third-party insurers regarding criteria and determination of pension/benefits for individuals with hearing loss and related disorders. This may include completion of Canada Revenue Agency tax forms.
- Assessment of fitness to work in hearing-critical jobs.
- Medical legal consultation including forensic audiology and testifying as an expert witness.

PRACTICE SETTINGS

Audiologists work in a variety of health and education settings, including but not limited to:

- hospitals
- public health units

- community health centres
- schools
- private practice
- nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- patient or client homes
- industrial settings
- hearing aid and cochlear implant manufacturers
- professional associations
- regulatory bodies
- universities and colleges
- government ministries

Audiologists may also provide services via telepractice when appropriate.

Note: SAC acknowledges that there are predominantly two health-care professions that provide services to conduct hearing tests for the purposes of selecting, fitting and dispensing hearing aids and other assistive listening devices. These two groups –audiologists and hearing instrument practitioners (also known as hearing instrument specialists, hearing aid dispensers, hearing aid practitioners and hearing aid dealers) – have different scopes of practice, which are defined by their education and training and by regulatory distinctions.

SAC believes that the two professions must provide hearing health care within their scopes of practice for the populations they serve, and that the public must be made aware of the significant differences between the two professions when seeking hearing health-care services. To learn more, read SAC's position paper: [Differences Between Audiologists and Hearing Instrument Practitioners in Hearing Health Care.](#)

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