



Scope of Practice for Speech-Language Pathology

Speech-Language and Audiology Canada

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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

Speech-language pathology 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 a speech-language pathologist and such innovations and advances will result in periodic revision of this document.

It is recognized that speech-language pathologists 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. Speech-language pathologists are ethically bound to provide services that are consistent with their competence, education and experience.

Speech-language pathologists 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

Speech-language pathologists are health professionals who identify, diagnose and treat communication and swallowing disorders across the lifespan.

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Speech-language pathologists may practice independently or within an interprofessional framework, collaborating with other professionals such as audiologists, physicians, nurses, educators, dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, child care staff and social workers, as well as communication health assistants. Speech-language pathologists provide a broad range of clinical and other professional services.

Clinical Services

- Screening of hearing, communication or swallowing for the purpose of determining whether or not a comprehensive assessment is needed. Follow-up from screenings may lead to referrals to speech-language pathologists, audiologists or other professionals for further assessment.
- Formal and informal assessment of communication and swallowing, which may involve evaluation, diagnosis and counselling.
- Intervention for communication and swallowing 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:
 - speech sound production;
 - resonance;
 - voice;
 - fluency;
 - pre-linguistic communication;
 - language comprehension and expression;
 - pre-literacy and literacy skills;
 - cognitive communication;
 - social (pragmatic) communication;
 - feeding and swallowing;
 - alternative and augmentative communication;
 - aural (re)habilitation
 - accent modification;

and the impacts of communication and swallowing disorders on everyday life.

Prevention, Promotion and Advocacy

- Prevention, counselling and education services to patients or clients, families, caregivers, other professionals and the public regarding all aspects of communication and swallowing function.
- Promotion of practices that optimize communication, swallowing and hearing health and development.
- Promotion of the profession of speech-language pathology.
- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with communication and swallowing disorders and populations that are at risk.
- Advocacy for the profession of speech-language pathology.

Education and Research

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

Administration

- Management and supervision of staff, students and communication health assistants.
- Development, implementation and evaluation of programs, 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 communication and/or swallowing impairments. This may include completion of Canada Revenue Agency tax forms.
- Consultation regarding assessments of capacity and competency for those with communication impairments.
- Determining whether patients or clients have sufficient communication abilities to carry out their job-related duties, and what accommodations, if any, are needed.

- Testifying as an expert witness.
- Acting as a [communication intermediary](#) (i.e., assisting people with speech and language disabilities not caused by hearing loss to give accurate, complete and authentic evidence in all phases of the justice system).

PRACTICE SETTINGS

Speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings, including but not limited to:

- hospitals
- public health units
- community health centres
- schools
- private practice
- nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- childcare centres
- patient or client homes
- corporate settings
- correctional facilities
- professional associations
- regulatory bodies
- universities and colleges
- government ministries

Speech-language pathologists may also provide services via telepractice when appropriate.

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