

# Speech-Language Pathologists



**SAC**  
Speech-Language  
& Audiology Canada  
Communicating care

## Part of Your Primary Care Team

**Speech-language pathologists** (S-LPs) are regulated healthcare professionals with a minimum master's degree who prevent, assess, identify, and manage communication and swallowing issues (e.g., speech, language, voice, social communication, cognitive-communication) in children, teens, and adults within a team-based, person- and family-centered framework.

## How can S-LPs support primary care as an integrated team member?

S-LPs can offer faster access to specialized and comprehensive care, differential diagnosis support, preventative health services, improved patient/family outcomes, and quality improvement initiatives such as creating an environment that is more communication accessible through resource development, environmental adaptations, and staff training.



### Did you know?

**S-LPs identify and manage difficulties or concerns across the lifespan related to:**

- Speech development (*delays, apraxia, etc.*)
- Language development (*delays, autism, etc.*)
- Pre-literacy and literacy skills (*reading/writing, dyslexia, etc.*)
- Fluency (*stuttering*)
- Voice and resonance (*hoarse or unsustainable voice, gender-affirming, etc.*)
- Swallowing and feeding
- Acquired speech and language difficulties (*stroke, primary progressive aphasia, brain injury, etc.*)
- Cognitive-communication (*concussions, brain injury, dementia, etc.*)
- Hearing-related communication

Visit [sac-oac.ca](https://sac-oac.ca) to learn more.

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### Pediatric Case

A parent expresses concerns about potential speech and language delays in their child to their family doctor. The waitlist for publicly-funded S-LP services in the community is 12-18 months and the parents cannot afford private services. As an integrated team member, the S-LP could:

- reduce parent anxiety and stress related to lengthy waitlists;
- improve child confidence and set them up for success (learning, social, and academic) through early identification and treatment;
- direct the family to appropriate community services as needed;
- act as a liaison to the child's daycare or school for speech/language needs; and
- provide workshops open to all parents on strategies to promote speech and language development as a preventative and accessible service.



### Adult Case

**A patient has a new diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. They report some food sticking in their throat. Their spouse indicates their speech is a bit quieter and they're having more difficulty finding the right words. As an integrated team member, the S-LP could:**

- assess (to obtain baseline information) and monitor swallowing, speech, language, and cognitive-communication in the context of a progressive, neurological disease;
- begin education/counselling for potential changes associated with Parkinson's disease;
- begin treatment including potential group therapy sessions that can improve safety, independence, engagement, mood, and reduce caregiver burnout;
- connect the patient and family to appropriate team and community resources; and
- reduce likelihood of hospitalizations related to adverse swallowing complications.