

Scope of Practice for Speech-Language Pathology

Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)

Statement of Purpose

This document provides a general description of the scope of practice for the profession of speech-language pathology in Canada, highlighting the broad range of services that it provides. The document is intended as a resource for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, health care professionals, regulatory bodies, government agencies, third party insurers, educators, consumers and the general public.

The scope of practice document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of activities and some may not fall into the exclusive domain of a speech-language pathologist. 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 individual providers may limit their practice by age or type of disorder. Additionally, professionals may have the expertise to provide services that do not appear in this document. In some provinces/territories where the profession is regulated, controlled acts limit the scope of practice and practice guidelines have been developed. Speech-language pathologists are ethically bound to provide services that are consistent with the scope of their competence, education and experience.

Definition

Speech-language pathologists are autonomous professionals who have expertise in typical development and disorders of communication and swallowing, as well as assessment and intervention for these areas. In some provinces/territories, speech-language pathologists are governed by a regulatory body and must meet regulatory requirements to practice.

Speech-language pathologists are involved in a number of different activities to promote effective communication and swallowing for the individuals they serve. These activities may include:

- Assessment of communication and swallowing disorders, which may involve: screening, identification, evaluation, and diagnosis.
- Intervention for communication and swallowing disorders, which may involve: promotion, prevention, counselling, treatment, consultation, management, (re)habilitation, and education.
- Education and supervision of students and professionals, including supportive personnel.
- Consultation with and referral to other professionals.
- Research.
- University and/or college education and training.
- Administration, management and policy development.

Speech-language pathologists may work directly with clients, and/or with their caregivers or other persons who regularly interact with them (e.g. friends, relatives, professionals, colleagues, supportive personnel etc.), for the purpose of creating environments that promote optimal communication and swallowing.



Educational Requirements

A Master's degree in speech-language pathology (or equivalent) is the current entry to practice requirement in all jurisdictions in Canada.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Speech-language pathologists may work alone or as part of an interprofessional team to help individuals of all ages to communicate effectively and to swallow safely and efficiently. As such, they provide a broad range of services and related activities including:

- Clinical and/or instrumental screening, assessment, identification, diagnosis, treatment, and management of:
 - **Speech delays and disorders** including articulation, phonology, motor speech.
 - **Language delays and disorders** including expression and comprehension in oral or non-verbal modalities.
 - **Fluency disorders** including stuttering.
 - **Voice and resonance disorders.**
 - **Swallowing and feeding disorders** in adult and paediatric populations including oral-motor function.
 - **Cognitive-communicative disorders** including social communication skills, reasoning, problem solving, and executive functions.
 - **Preliteracy and literacy skills** including phonological awareness, decoding, reading comprehension, and writing.
 - **Communication and swallowing disorders in the context of other diagnoses or impairments** including but not limited to hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, dementia, developmental, intellectual or genetic disorders, and neurological impairments.
- Assessment, selection, and development of augmentative and alternative communication systems and devices for individuals who are limited in their ability to communicate verbally, and provision of education and training in their use.
- Promotion, prevention, counseling, and education services to clients, families, caregivers, other professionals, and the public regarding all aspects of human communication, and disorders of communication and swallowing.
- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with communication and swallowing disorders and those who are at-risk.
- Enhancement of speech and language proficiency and communication effectiveness including accent modification.
- Screening of hearing and other factors for initial identification and referral to audiologists, educators, and to other health and/or school-based professionals.
- Consultation with and referral to other professionals.
- Interprofessional collaboration.
- Case management and coordination of service delivery.
- Supervision and training of supportive personnel.
- Education, supervision, and mentoring of students.
- Research related to communication sciences and disorders and swallowing.
- University and/or college education and training related to communication sciences and disorders and swallowing.
- Administration, management and policy development.

Practice Settings

Speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings, including but not limited to: hospitals, rehabilitation centres, mental health facilities, nursing homes, childcare facilities, early intervention programs, schools, universities, colleges, research centres, private and group homes, and private practice.

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