

# Position Statement: Guidelines for the Use of Supportive Personnel



*The College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO) believes that the responsible use of unregulated supportive personnel who are trained to carry out specific functions under the direction of a registered speech-language pathologist or audiologist can augment the services provided to the communicatively-disordered populations. CASLPO does not mandate the use of supportive personnel. Inappropriate use and supervision of supportive personnel may result in charges of professional misconduct being brought against a member.*

## **General Principles**

***The supervising member bears the legal and ethical responsibility for client/patient management including all services provided or omitted.***

Since the member is responsible for all professional services delivered to patients/clients, the member must determine the manner in which he/she carries out his/her supervisory role. The guidelines are provided to assist members in this process. They provide instruction in the ways in which supervision can be responsible and can be seen to be responsible.

The College recognizes that variations in service setting and working conditions may necessitate variations (innovative ways) in which supervision is provided to assistants. It is important that any departure from the guidelines be accompanied by a rationale that sets out the reasons and justification for this. The member must be able to demonstrate that there is no risk of harm to the public in any such departure from the guidelines.

1. Personnel who assist the speech-language pathologist or audiologist in the delivery of clinical services to clients/patients must work under the direction of the speech-language pathologist or audiologist.
2. The work to be performed by the speech or hearing assistant is assigned by the speech-language pathologist or audiologist.
3. The supervising member ensures that the unregulated service provider has the education, training and experience commensurate with the services provided.
4. The supervising member performs his/her supervisory activities in an accountable manner.
5. The consumer is informed when services are provided by the speech or hearing assistant.
6. The member must determine whether the patient's/client's needs or communication disorder precludes the provision of services from anyone other than a speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

***1. Personnel who assist the speech-language pathologist or audiologist in the delivery of clinical services to clients/patients must work under the direction of the speech-language pathologist or audiologist.***

- Members should normally work in the same physical setting as the speech or hearing assistant. A rationale should be available and arrangements made for any exceptions.
- If the supervising member leaves the employment setting for any reason (i.e. maternity leave, illness, change of employment), the member must inform the employer that the supervisee is no longer working under direction and that it is essential for the employer to arrange for another member to provide supervision.
- The College recommends, where possible, that the supervising member have no less than two years of experience in the profession prior to undertaking a supervisory role. The College understands that this is not always possible but believes that this is a goal to which members and employers should aspire. It is also desirable that supervision skills be developed and updated through educational courses and activities.
- Wherever possible, the supervising member should participate in the selection of the speech or hearing assistant.
- It is not permissible for members to receive payment from or otherwise be in the employment of speech/hearing assistants whom they supervise. This will be considered grounds for charges of professional misconduct against the supervising member.

***2. The work to be performed by the speech or hearing assistant is assigned by the speech-language pathologist or audiologist***

- The supervising speech-language pathologist must have sufficient face-to-face contact with the clients assigned to the speech assistant

that adequate planning for the effective delivery of services can occur. Although the supervising audiologist may not have face-to-face contact with the clients assigned to the hearing assistant, the member is responsible for the accuracy of the testing and the recommendations made.

- Work assignments must be commensurate with the skills of the speech or hearing assistant. The scope of the procedures to be carried out by the speech or hearing assistant must be clearly stipulated and understood. This would include indicators when further assistance from the supervisor is required.
- The performance of the duties assigned to the speech or hearing assistant and the progress of patients/clients will be monitored through such means as will allow the member to assume professional responsibility for all services rendered.
- In accordance with accepted standards of practice in the professions of audiology and speech-language pathology as outlined by the American, Canadian and Ontario professional associations of audiology and speech-language pathology and in accordance with CASLPO's preferred practice guidelines as they are developed.

#### **THE FOLLOWING TASKS MAY BE ASSIGNED TO A SPEECH OR HEARING ASSISTANT**

- a. Conduct speech-language or hearing screenings (without interpretation) following specified screening protocols developed by the supervising member.
- b. Perform puretone and speech audiometric testing (hearing assistant).
- c. Deliver direct treatment or remediation programs to patients/clients selected by the supervising member.
- d. Follow documented treatment/remediation plans or protocols developed by the supervising member.
- e. Document patient/client progress toward meeting established objectives as stated in the treatment/remediation plan, and report this information to the supervising member.
- f. Assist the supervising member during assessment of patients/clients.
- g. Assist with informal documentation, prepare materials, and assist with other clerical duties as directed by the supervising member.

h. Schedule activities, prepare charts, records, graphs, or otherwise display data.

- i. Perform checks and maintenance of equipment.
- j. Participate with the supervising member in in-service training and public relations programs.

#### **THE FOLLOWING TASKS ARE OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF A SPEECH OR HEARING ASSISTANT**

The speech or hearing assistant may not:

- a. Perform standardized or nonstandardized speech and language tests, formal or informal evaluations, or interpret test results.
- b. Participate in parent conferences, case conferences or any interdisciplinary team meeting without the presence of the supervising member.
- c. Provide patient/client or family counselling.
- d. Write, develop, or modify a patient's/client's individualized treatment/remediation plan in any way.
- e. Assist with patients/clients without following the individualized treatment/remediation plan prepared by the supervising member or without access to supervision.
- f. Sign any formal documents unless countersigned by the supervisor. The hearing assistant may initial reports that are sent to the audiologist/referring physician for interpretation.
- g. Admit patients/clients for services.
- h. Discharge a patient/client from services.
- i. Disclose clinical or confidential information either orally or in writing to anyone not designated by the supervising member.
- j. Make referrals for additional services.
- k. Communicate with the patient/client, family, or others regarding any aspect of the patient/client status or service without the specific consent of the supervising member.

l. Represent himself or herself as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

m. Prescribe, select or adjust (other than volume) a hearing aid.

**3. The supervising member ensures that the speech/hearing assistant has the education, training and experience commensurate with the assigned functions.**

- Speech and hearing assistants may be trained on the job or may have completed training from a community college such as the Communicative Disorders Assistant Program at Georgian College. Educational backgrounds vary considerably from high school education to undergraduate degrees followed by a college course.
- The variability in the preparation of supportive personnel as well as patient/client variability will require individually tailored training and supervision. A job description detailing tasks at varying levels of difficulty with the levels of training, skill or experience required should be available. The range and content of supervision should be based on the skills and experience of the speech/hearing assistant as well as the needs of the patients/clients served and the service setting.
- The use of well-trained and supervised supportive personnel, in accordance with the guidelines, may be a way to increase the frequency of services to patients/clients while maintaining the quality of the services provided.

**4. The supervising member performs his/her supervisory activities in an accountable manner**

- "These guidelines are provided in order to remind members that if they do not believe they can adhere to them, then they should consider themselves at risk in their role as supervisors." 1
- The amount of supervision required will depend upon the type of tasks assigned, the patient/client population, the competence of the speech or audiology assistant, the judgement of the assistant, and the number of years that the assistant has been working in the clinical setting. It is believed, however, that the supervisor must engage in some monitoring activity weekly to fulfil his/her legal and ethical obligations. The member must keep evidence of such supervision.
- In instances such as orientation of a new speech/hearing assistant, initiation of a new program, equipment or tasks, supervision would

be required for a minimum of 20% of the time that the assistant spends in patient/client contact.

- In general, the member should supervise no more than two or three assistants. Any exceptions to this should be documented and a rationale available.
- The proportion of direct to indirect supervision will reflect the needs of the clients/patients and the competence of the speech or audiology assistant.

**5. The consumer is informed when services are provided by a speech assistant or a hearing assistant.**

- Clients/patients seen by the speech or hearing assistant should be informed that this is the case. The designation or title of the speech or hearing assistant should be appropriate to the role and not misleading to the public.
- Clients/patients should be informed that there will be times when the supervising member will be observing and/or participating in treatment/remediation sessions.
- Clients/patients should be informed that they may request meetings with the supervising member to discuss aspects of their treatment/remediation plan.

**6. The member must determine whether the patient's/client's needs or communication disorder precludes the provision of services from anyone other than a speech-language pathologist or audiologist.**

- CASLPO does not mandate the use of supportive personnel in the provision of professional services. The member must determine when his/her skills and time will be put to better use through the use of supportive personnel. The member must likewise determine when it is not in the best interest of the consumer to use supportive personnel.
- The decision as to whether certain tasks, procedures or activities can be performed adequately by persons other than the member must be made by the member himself/herself. A member should never feel obliged to use a speech or hearing assistant if there is any question that quality of service may be compromised.

# Definitions

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## College

College refers to the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO). CASLPO was established under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to regulate the practice of audiologists and speech-language pathologists in the public interest.

## Member

Member refers to a speech-language pathologist or audiologist who is registered in the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario. Only registered members of CASLPO can use the titles 'audiologist', 'speech-language pathologist', 'speech therapist', a variation or abbreviation or an equivalent in another language.

## Scopes of Practice

*(Bill 44, An Act respecting the regulation of the Professions of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, 1991)*

The practice of speech-language pathology is the assessment of speech and language functions and the treatment and prevention of speech and language dysfunctions or disorders to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment oral motor or communicative functions.

The practice of audiology is the assessment of auditory function and the treatment and prevention of auditory dysfunction to develop, maintain, rehabilitate or augment auditory and communicative functions.

## Supportive Personnel

In this paper, supportive personnel refers to non-regulated personnel who following academic and/or on-the-job training assist members in the provision of clinical services as assigned and directed by members of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario. For example, communicative disorders assistants (CDAs) who have been trained at Georgian College are supportive personnel.

## Speech Assistant or Hearing Assistant

These terms are used synonymously with supportive personnel, but indicate the professional member under whom direction is provided.

## Screening

A pass-fail procedure to identify persons who may require further assessment.

## Direct Supervision

Direct supervision refers to on-site, in-view observation and guidance by the supervising member while an assigned activity is performed by a speech or hearing assistant.

## Indirect Supervision

Indirect supervision refers to methods other than direct observation and guidance conducted by the supervising member. These may include record review, review and evaluation of audio-taped or video-taped sessions, interactive television, and the like.

# References

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1. College of Psychologists of Ontario. "Guidelines for members of the College supervising non-registered personnel." (June 1994).
2. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. "Guidelines for the training, credentialing, use and supervision of speech-language pathology assistants." *ASHA* 38, Supplement 16(Spring 1996):21-34.
3. Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists "Position Paper on Support Personnel in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology." *J. Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology* 30 (December 1996): 267-268.
4. Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. "Guidelines for the employment and utilization of supportive personnel." Submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Supportive Personnel. (1988).