



PRACTICE ADVICE

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERS

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Here at the College we receive a number of enquiries regarding volunteers; either working with volunteers or members wishing to volunteer themselves. People volunteer for a variety of reasons, from a sense of wanting to 'give back', to gaining valuable experience or to help a university application. Volunteers bring a variety of skills and benefits to the work place: professional expertise, previous life experiences and enthusiasm.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

When working with volunteers remember that you, as the College member, are responsible for all aspects of patient care. Also, a patient's name when connected to audiology or speech language pathology is personal health information and must remain confidential.

Before you work with volunteers, ask yourself the following questions:

- What activities and tasks do I want help with?
- What activities and tasks is the volunteer capable of doing?
- Will I ask the volunteer to carry out clinical tasks?
- What clinical tasks, with what patients and under what circumstances?

The answer to these questions will direct the use and supervision of your volunteers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question

I have a psychology student volunteering with me who wants to apply to graduate school for speech-language pathology. She has been observing sessions, doing some patient activities with me and she has very good interactive skills. Can she work with patients on her own if I supervise her?

Answer

Although the student is a volunteer, if you want her to provide any form of intervention with patients you should consider her 'support personnel'. Support personnel refers to individuals who are directly assigned clinical tasks by the member to assist in the provision of speech language pathology or audiology related intervention.

As a College member, you are responsible for all aspects of patient care that you assign to the volunteer. You are expected to exercise discretion and judgement in assigning clinical tasks; ask yourself does the volunteer have the skills for this task with this patient? You must get informed consent from the patient or substitute decision maker (SDM) to receive services from a volunteer and supervise them both directly and indirectly. You must also ensure that the volunteer's clinical activities are documented in the patient record.

For more information on working with support personnel please refer to the [Position Statement on the Use of Support Personnel by Speech Language Pathologists](#).

Question

I work in a community communication program which uses trained volunteers. The volunteers document group attendance, but are experienced volunteers allowed to document anything else in the patient record?

Answer

Consider the knowledge, skills and judgement of the volunteer and the potential activities you wish them to document. If you have a supervisory relationship with the volunteer and you are assigning clinical tasks to carry out with the group members, the volunteers are considered to be support personnel and you must follow the College's Position Statement.

Yes, volunteers, under these circumstances, can document activities and patient responses in the patient record. However, only College members can form a clinical opinion or interpretation. Remember your supervisory requirements, which include reviewing support personnel documentation. [Position Statement on the Use of Support Personnel by Speech Language Pathologists](#). Finally, the [Records Regulation](#) requires the following:

32.2. 6. The identity of the person who provided any service to the patient, if that person was not the member.

Question

I am an audiologist and I own my own clinic. I have been approached by a high school student who wants to complete their volunteer hours at the clinic carrying out office duties. Can he file patient charts and answer the phone etc.?

Answer

If you would benefit from the services of a volunteer high school student, then yes. However, you should consider carefully the tasks you want to give the student, try and determine their skill level. Whatever task they do for you, they will come across people's names, and because those names are linked to you as an audiologist, the names are personal health information. Ask your volunteer student must sign a confidentiality agreement and impress upon them the gravity of keeping personal health information confidential.

With regard to answering the phone, determine if the student has the competencies and communication skills to interact with your patients and potential patients. This task also involves collecting personal health information, and care must be taken. Presumably you will train him about the services you offer and the documentation requirements. If a patient

cancels an appointment, for example, that must be documented in the patient record ([Records Regulation](#)).

Ultimately you are responsible for every aspect of patient care including ensuring personal health information is confidential and that patients are treated with respect and sensitivity.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING AS A VOLUNTEER

As a general member, when volunteering your services as an audiologist or speech language pathologist, you must comply with all College standards as though you were in a paid position.

Question

I am a general member of CASLPO but lost my job six months ago. I thought it would be easy to get another job, but that isn't the case. Can I volunteer at an Aphasia Centre program as an SLP? Will the hours count towards the currency requirement for registration (750 hours over a three year period)?

Answer

Yes you can volunteer your services as an SLP with a general member certificate. Remember, even if you are not being paid, as a general member of the College you have to follow all regulation requirements and practice standards, and participate in the Quality Assurance program. It is beneficial to ensure that the Aphasia Centre knows that they should have the same expectations of you as an SLP staff member.

Yes, you may document the volunteer hours towards the currency requirements outlined in the [Registration Regulation](#). We have included the definitions of Direct Client Care and related work:

PATIENT CARE includes Direct Client Care or Supervision of Direct Client Care where:

DIRECT CLIENT CARE is defined as professional activities on behalf of a client including:

- Assessment of the hearing, communication or swallowing abilities and needs of the client.
- Recommending, developing or implementing a treatment and/or management program based on the clients abilities and needs.
- Counseling and consulting with the families/caregivers and/or other parties or individuals directly associated with the client.
- Other client management activities such as discharge, referrals, follow-up, report writing, case conferences.
- Conducting research in speech-language pathology or audiology that involves the assessment or management of patients with communication disorders.

SUPERVISION OF DIRECT CLIENT CARE is defined as:

- Overseeing and evaluating the clinical work of speech-language pathologists or audiologists (e.g. conducting performance evaluations or case reviews, assessing written reports, monitoring professional standards).
- Determining, on professional grounds whether an individual client should receive or be discharged from speech-language pathology or audiology services.
- Supervising research in speech-language pathology or audiology that involves the assessment or management of clients with communication disorders.

RELATED WORK includes:

- Making decisions on the organization and delivery of clinical services in speech-language pathology or audiology.
- Educating speech-language pathologist or audiologists concerning services or products that may be employed in the assessment or management of patients with communication disorders.
- The administration for professional organizations where the member sets or maintains professional standards of practice for speech-language pathologists or audiologists.

QUESTION

I am a bilingual member and have been approached by a Chilean family who are unable to pay for my services. Am I able to provide SLP services pro bono?

Answer

Yes you may waive a fee for service, but there are other issues you should consider. Ask yourself the extent of your service; will it include your travel expenses, travel time, reports for other agencies, phone calls to obtain other services etc.? Consider how many sessions you will provide pro bono and ensure that the family understands the extent and timeframe of your service. Treat this family in the same way as you would paying clients if you have attendance and discharge policies.

It is prudent in these situations to be aware of boundary issues. When we provide services pro bono, our patients and families may have unrealistic expectations some of which may cross boundaries. You are still required to keep a patient record, even if the service is free. Document your explanations to the family regarding the service you will provide, as well as the plan of care.

Question

I am a Non-Practicing member of CASLPO taking an extended parental leave. I have been asked to volunteer in my son's pre-school one afternoon a week. They know that I am an audiologist and they want me to do some listening activities on a voluntary basis. Am I able to do this?

Answer

First you must make it clear to the preschool that you are currently 'non-practicing' which means that you are not eligible to engage in active professional practice in Ontario. Parents cannot be told that one of the volunteers in the preschool program is an audiologist. Nevertheless, as long as you, and the preschool, are not holding yourself out as a practicing audiologist, you can volunteer.

As a non-practicing member you cannot assess any child for hearing, speech, or language disorders. However, if, through your knowledge, skill and judgement, you observe a child who would benefit from a referral to an audiologist or speech language pathologist, you can make that recommendation to the preschool teacher.