

SUPPORTIVE PERSONNEL
GUIDELINES
Working with
Audiologists



**Canadian Association of
Speech-Language Pathologists
and Audiologists**

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1.0 Introduction

The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) has undertaken to develop membership guidelines that would dictate under what conditions and with what requirements and responsibilities Supportive Personnel might join the Association. The consideration of this question dates back to 1995, followed by an 87% majority of members who voted in 1999 endorsing a move by CASLPA to create a new “associate” member category. The vote was followed by a two-year project in four-phases to define the conditions, requirements and responsibilities of this new membership category. An expert panel was formed to lead the process of forming consensus statements that laid out the requirements and responsibilities. These statements were validated by an independent sample of 200 members and the results of the validation synthesized into a final report. The Board of Directors worked through statements that did not reach consensus by the expert panel and produced a final draft report in February of 2004.

CASLPA conducted a questionnaire of all members in Spring/Summer of 2004 requesting feedback on statements included in the final draft report relating to Scope of Practice, Core Competencies, Training Requirements, Supervisory Guidelines, Code of Ethics and Grandfathering. The questionnaires were sent to 692 Audiologists. Of these, 161 responded for a response rate of 23%. The Board then reviewed the results of the questionnaire at a meeting on October 2, 2004 and accepted most of the statements that received a consensus rating from members of approximately 80 per cent.

The following document represents the work of the Expert Panel, CASLPA’s Board of Directors and feedback from Audiology members in Canada.

Note: CASLPA’s Supportive Personnel members must adhere to these guidelines unless provincial/territorial guidelines are in place. Provincial/territorial regulations/legislation always take precedence.

2.0 Scope of Practice for Support Personnel

A. Areas to be within the Scope of Practice

Supportive Personnel in audiology may engage in the following activity:

1. Assisting with hearing screening programs administered by an Audiologist.
2. Screening using immittance measurements, oto-acoustic emissions, and audiometry following established pass/fail protocols.
3. Assisting an Audiologist with the testing of infants, pre-school (i.e., 0-6 years), and difficult-to-test patients/clients.
4. Assisting an Audiologist during assessments, including, but not limited to, assisting with formal/informal documentation, preparing materials, and performing clerical duties for a supervising Audiologist.
5. Conducting electro-acoustic analysis of hearing aids and FM systems following established protocols.
6. Providing listening checks and troubleshooting hearing aids, FM systems, and other assistive listening devices.
7. Making ear mold modifications and shell modifications following established protocols.
8. Conducting minor repairs and cleaning of hearing aids.
9. Demonstrating and orienting clients to assistive listening and alerting devices.
10. Educating clients regarding earplugs and prevention of noise induced hearing loss, as established by the supervising Audiologist.
11. Assisting with departmental operations: appointment scheduling, chart preparation, data collection, record keeping, safety procedures, maintenance of supplies and equipment and audio-visual equipment operation.
12. Assisting an Audiologist with research projects, in-service training, and family or community education using materials approved by the supervising Audiologist.

13. Assisting the Audiologist to communicate with patients/clients when there are language differences and the Supportive Personnel is competent in the patient/client's language.
14. Assisting the Audiologist in the installation of sound field amplification systems (i.e., classrooms, meeting rooms, etc.).
15. Reporting patient/client information to the supervising Audiologist and documenting as directed by the supervising Audiologist.
16. Attending staff meetings when required.

B. Areas to be outside the Scope of Practice

Supportive Personnel in audiology may not engage in the following activities:

1. Representing oneself as an Audiologist.
2. Selecting patients/clients for service.
3. Conducting evaluations, interpreting data, altering treatment plans, or explaining assessment results of clients.
4. Diagnosing patients/clients.
5. Using diagnostic procedures without knowledge of the supervising Audiologist.
6. Interpreting performance or progress of patients/clients or discussing prognosis.
7. Counselling or consulting with the patient/client, family, or others regarding patient/client status or service.
8. Making referrals for additional services, except as specifically approved by a supervising Audiologist.
9. Discharging patients/clients from services.
10. Signing any documents in lieu of a supervising Audiologist (e.g., treatment plans, client reimbursement forms, or formal reports).

11. Disclosing confidential information either orally or in writing to anyone without appropriate consent, unless required by law.
12. Participating in case conferences or inter-disciplinary team conferences without a supervising Audiologist or another Audiologist being present.
13. Selecting and/or fitting hearing aids or assistive devices.
14. Modifying the electro-acoustic performance of a hearing aid.
15. Having initial contact with patients/clients without approval or direction of the supervising Audiologist.
16. Writing reports without the knowledge and consent of the supervising Audiologist.
17. Cerumen management.

3.0 Core Competencies for Supportive Personnel

A. Qualifications

Supportive Personnel in Audiology should possess the following qualifications:

1. A minimum of a High School diploma or the equivalent.
2. Completion of a training program (see training requirements).
3. Functional communication skills.

B. Basic Core Competencies

Supportive Personnel in Audiology are expected to be proficient in:

1. Selecting, preparing, and presenting materials consistent with the program designed by an Audiologist.
2. Demonstrating an understanding of treatment objectives.
3. Managing time effectively.
4. Responding effectively to attitudes and behaviours of patients/clients.
5. Relating to and interacting positively with supervisors, colleagues and the population being served.
6. Seeking advice from a supervising Audiologist when necessary.
7. Being able to work under supervision.
8. Demonstrating appropriate conduct (e.g., respecting/maintaining confidentiality of patients/clients, maintaining personal appearance appropriate for the work setting, evaluating own performance, and recognizing own professional limitations).
9. Keeping accurate records (e.g., documenting treatment plans and protocols accurately and concisely).

4.0 Training Requirements for Supportive Personnel

A. Operational Aspects of Training

Supportive Personnel will:

1. Have completed training from an educational program for Supportive Personnel in speech-language pathology and/or audiology.
2. Satisfy the competencies defined in this document under Training Requirements.

B. Coursework

Potential training requirements for coursework for Supportive Personnel are outlined below.

1. Introduction to the profession of Supportive Personnel - roles, Scope of Practice, guidelines, supervision, ethical and regulatory issues.
2. Anatomy & physiology of the speech & hearing mechanisms.
3. Normal speech, language and hearing development.
4. Communication disorders: screening and treatment methods.
5. Developmental and behavioural psychology working in the field of communication disorders.
6. Clinical procedures in communication disorders including observing, preparing materials, report writing, documenting, functioning and maintenance of instrumentation
7. Introduction to the use of instrumentation, and technology in communication disorders:
8. Amplification systems and aural rehabilitation.

C. Fieldwork

Potential training requirements for fieldwork for Supportive Personnel in Audiology should include:

1. Assisting with screening or evaluation under the supervision of an Audiologist.
2. Assisting with the clinical management of persons with communicative disorders, under the supervision of an Audiologist including preparing materials for therapy, following treatment plans, documenting performance, and reporting to the supervising therapist.
3. Assisting the Audiologist with the implementation of the treatment.
4. Setting up clinical equipment and materials.
5. Record keeping and managing of clinical data.
6. Performing various clerical duties.
7. Students will complete a practicum in an assistive capacity with an Audiologist at an agency or agencies (approved by their training program), accruing a minimum of 100 hours of fieldwork experience.

5.0 Supervisory Guidelines for Supportive Personnel

A. Supervisory Training

1. Supportive Personnel should be supervised by an Audiologist with clinical experience (ideally a minimum of two years). The supervisor must be a CASLPA member or registered/licensed with a provincial/territorial regulatory body.
2. Additional preparation in the form of formal course work, workshop attendance, peer support, mentorship or independent study in the area of supervision is highly recommended for professionals supervising Supportive Personnel.
3. The content of such training/experience should include but is not limited to:
 - a. The practise of clinical audiology including the mandated reporting laws and knowledge of ethical and legal issues.
 - b. Familiarity with best practice supervision literature.
 - c. Improving knowledge and understanding of the relationship between an Audiologist and the Supportive Personnel member, and the relationship between an Audiologist and the patient/client.
 - d. Knowledge of contextual variables such as culture, gender, ethnicity, and economic issues.
 - e. Structuring to maximize supervision, including times and conditions of supervision sessions, problem solving ability, and implementing supervisor interventions within a range of supervisory modalities including live, videotape, audiotape, and case report methods.
4. A supervising Audiologist should maintain records related to continuing professional development in supervision.

B. Amount and type of supervision of the CASLPA Supportive Personnel member

1. The supervising Audiologist is ultimately responsible for the patient/client as stated in the CASLPA Code of Ethics.
2. The amount and type of supervision required should be based on the skills and experience of the Supportive Personnel member, the needs of the patients/clients served, the service setting, the tasks assigned, and other pertinent factors.
3. Supervisory Audiologists should be available to direct, support, and consult with Supportive Personnel at all times.
4. Supervising Audiologists and/or Supportive Personnel must inform the patient/client and his/her family or other caregivers about the role of the Supportive Personnel in providing services and the role of the Audiologist in overseeing this service provision.
5. Information obtained during direct observation may include data related to:
 - a. Agreement (reliability) between the Supportive Personnel member and a supervising Audiologist on correct/incorrect judgment of target behaviour).
 - b. Accuracy in record keeping
 - c. Ability to interact effectively with the patient/client and their caregivers and/or family.
6. Whenever areas (a) through (c) listed above fall below an agreed upon level as determined by a supervising Audiologist and the Supportive Personnel member, the Supportive Personnel member should be retrained in those skills, and direct observation should be increased until an acceptable level of performance is evidenced.
7. In some instances, it may be necessary to change Supportive Personnel members' duties or relieve them of all duties if a high standard of proficiency cannot be attained or they repeatedly violate these guidelines.
8. Supervising Audiologists shall document their supervision of Supportive Personnel.
9. Supervising Audiologists should cite and approve all pertinent documentation provided by the Supportive Personnel member.

10. It is not permissible for supervising Audiologists to receive payment from or otherwise be in the employment of Supportive Personnel whom they supervise.
11. Whenever possible, the employer should ensure that an alternate means of supervision by another Audiologist can be provided when the primary supervising Audiologist is not available.
12. When a supervising Audiologist is unavailable and no other Audiologist is accessible, then the employer shall have a list of job activities that are within the prescribed Scope of Practice of Supportive Personnel in speech-language pathology/audiology that can be carried out in the absence of supervision. The member should ensure that the employer is aware that the Supportive Personnel cannot carry out a number of activities without supervision.
13. The supervisor will provide direct supervision for a minimum of 10% of the client contact time. A comparable amount of time will be spent in indirect supervision. It is the supervising Audiologist's responsibility to ensure that the amount of supervision matches the level of support that the Supportive Personnel requires. A greater amount of supervision may be required depending on the competence level of the Supportive Personnel, especially when they are newly qualified.
 - * Direct = on-site, in-view observation and guidance by a Audiologist while an assigned activity is performed by the Supportive Personnel member.
 - ** Indirect = review of audio/video recordings, progress notes, and data. Indirect observations may take place on site or be carried out by phone or through written communication.
14. Supervising Speech-Language Pathologists and/or Supportive Personnel must inform the patient/client and his/her family or other caregivers about the role of the Supportive Personnel providing services and the role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in overseeing this service provision.
15. The number of Supportive Personnel to be supervised shall be based on the training and experience of the Supportive Personnel, risk of harm, effectiveness of intervention in the patient/client population and consistent with the delivery of appropriate, quality service.

6.0 Code of Ethics for Supportive Personnel

A. Duties and Responsibilities to Patients and the Public

Supportive Personnel...

1. Shall meet national membership requirements.
2. Shall engage in only those aspects of practise that are within their own competence, considering their level of education, training, and experience, and within the competence of the supervising speech-language pathologist or Audiologist.
3. Shall not provide public or private services to clientele without a supervising speech-language pathologist or an Audiologist. (direct or indirect).
4. Shall not discriminate in the delivery of services on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or disability. However, area of practise may be limited by age or disorder/specialty.
5. Shall not misrepresent, in any fashion, services rendered.
6. Shall maintain adequate records of services rendered and shall allow access to these records when appropriately authorized.
7. Shall not reveal, without authorization, any professional or personal information about the patient/client served unless required by law to do so, or unless doing so is necessary to protect the welfare of the person or the community.
8. Shall not accept compensation other than salary for services rendered.

9. Supportive Personnel whose services are adversely affected by substance abuse or other health-related conditions shall withdraw from the affected areas of practise where appropriate, seek professional assistance.

B. Duties and Responsibilities to the Profession

Supportive Personnel...

1. Shall not intentionally misrepresent their credentials, competence, education, training, or experience.
2. Shall continue their professional development throughout their careers.
3. Shall not disparage the skill, knowledge, or service of co-workers.

C. Legal Responsibilities

1. Every Supportive Personnel member must abide by the Code of Ethics for Supportive Personnel. Each member may be subject to disciplinary review and procedures as outlined in CASLPA policies.
2. CASLPA may deny an application for a Supportive Personnel member in speech-language pathology/audiology or take disciplinary action against that member for any of the following:
 - a. Engaging in unprofessional conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Incompetence or gross negligence in performing speech-language pathology or audiology Supportive Personnel functions, education, clinical work, or fieldwork
 - ii. Procuring a license, certificate, or registration by fraud or misrepresentation
 - b. Making or giving any false statement or information in connection with the member's application for Supportive Personnel membership
 - c. Being convicted of a misdemeanor or felony substantially related to the qualifications, functions, and duties of Supportive Personnel, in which

event a copy of the record of conviction shall be conclusive evidence thereof

- d. Impersonating a speech-language pathologist, an Audiologist or other Supportive Personnel, or permitting or allowing another person to use the member's registration for the purpose of practicing or holding themselves out as a Supportive Personnel member in speech-language pathology or audiology
 - e. Violating or conspiring to violate, or aiding or abetting any person to violate the provisions of this article or any regulation adopted by CASLPA
 - f. Intentional misrepresentation as to the type or status of membership held, or otherwise intentionally misrepresenting or permitting misrepresentation of the member's education, professional qualifications, or professional affiliation to any person or entity
 - g. Intentionally or recklessly causing physical or emotional harm to any patient/client
 - h. Committing any dishonest, corrupt, or fraudulent act substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of a Supportive Personnel member
 - i. Condoning or engaging in sexual relations with a patient/client
 - j. Failing to maintain confidentiality, except as otherwise required or permitted by law, of all information that has been received from a patient/client in confidence during the course of treatment and all information about the patient/client obtained from tests or other means
 - k. Advertising in a manner that is false, misleading, or deceptive
3. The legal, ethical and moral responsibility for patient/client management lies with the supervisory speech-language pathologist or Audiologist and Supportive Personnel.