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Professional Practice Documents

Standards of Practice

Standards of practice play an important role in stating the practice requirements for professionals. They define the level of professional performance that speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists are expected to demonstrate to ensure competent, safe and ethical practice. The *Standards of Practice* represent the minimum standards of expected professional conduct and behavior. They are part of the overall legislative scheme and form a continuum with other documents such as Position Statements, Advisory Statements, Guidelines, Protocols, the *Code of Ethics* and *Competency Profiles*.

Regulated members of ACSLPA are accountable for practicing in compliance with the *Standards of Practice*, regardless of their practice area or setting. Practicing in breach of the *Standards of Practice*, the *Code of Ethics* or any other professional practice documents may constitute “unprofessional conduct” as defined in the *Health Professions Act* (HPA).

The Alberta Government requires that standards of practice be developed by colleges in consultation with their regulated members, the Alberta Minister of Health and other stakeholders. The *Standards of Practice* are available to regulated members and to the public on the ACSLPA website.

Standards of Practice have a different purpose and relevance to various stakeholders, both within and external to the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology. Specifically:

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- Regulated members use the standards to obtain guidance related to accountabilities, expectations and continuing competence.
- The College uses standards to inform practice related to continuing competency, complaints, and the conduct of regulated members.
- Educators can utilize the standards to serve as a framework for curriculum content and development, practice evaluation and program review, in conjunction with entry-to-practice competency statements.
- Managers/employers can use the standards to guide development of job descriptions and performance evaluation.
- Other health professionals may use the standards to provide insight into roles and responsibilities, overlapping areas of practice, and highlight opportunities for collaboration.
- The public may use the standards to gain understanding of that they can expect from services that are provided by SLPs and audiologists.

The *Standards of Practice* are organized into four broad standard areas:

1. **Service Delivery** addresses specific requirements related to client-centered services, evidence-informed practice, client assessment and intervention, communication collaboration, concurrent practice and telepractice;
2. **Professional Responsibility/Accountability** addresses specific requirements related to professional practice obligations, use of title, continuing competence and restricted activities;
3. **Ethical Practice** addresses specific requirements related to privacy/confidentiality, informed consent, professional boundaries and conflict of interest; and
4. **Practice Management** addresses specific requirements related to safety & risk management, quality improvement, documentation & information management and supervision. It also includes requirements for regulated members who work in a practice setting where they engage in advertising & promotional communications, human resource management and fees & billings.

Each standard area includes the following:

- Standard statements, which describe the expected level of performance of a regulated member from a professional and legal perspective.
- Indicators, which describe actions that demonstrate how a standard is applied in practice. They can assist in interpreting or measuring performance to determine if a standard is being achieved.

- Expected outcomes outline what a client may expect from the services provided by a regulated member.
- Resources list the documents that are relevant and provide additional information related to each standard.

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As per 2018 amendments to the *HPA*, a fifth standard area has recently been added which is *Sexual Abuse and Misconduct*. This area addresses the definition and maintenance of professional boundaries to protect patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by SLPs and audiologists.

It should be noted that all of the standard statements, indicators and expected outcomes are applicable to both SLPs and audiologists.

Code of Ethics

The *Code of Ethics* also plays an important role in stating the practice requirements for professionals. The *Code of Ethics* describes ethical expectations of SLPs and audiologists who provide professional services in Alberta. The *Code of Ethics* outlines the values, accountabilities and responsibilities by which SLPs and audiologists are expected to conduct their practice.

Each regulated member of ACSLPA is accountable for practicing in compliance with the *Code of Ethics*, regardless of their practice area or setting.

The Alberta Government requires that codes of ethics be developed by colleges in consultation with their regulated members, the Alberta Minister of Health and other stakeholders. The *Code of Ethics* is available to regulated members and to the public on the ACSLPA website.

The *Code of Ethics* serves to:

- Inform the public and other health care professionals of the ethical values that guide regulated members of ACSLPA;
- Provide regulated members with a resource for ethical reflection and self-evaluation;
- Provide guidance in ethical decision making for regulated members engaged in direct service to the public, and for those members engaged in research, education, administration and consultation;
- Promote accountability in professional activity; and
- Serve as a basis for the evaluation of professional conduct in the complaints process.

Competency Profiles

The *Competency Profiles* for SLPs and audiologists are another set of key documents that describe the professional practice requirements for each profession. Specifically, the *Competency Profiles* state the minimum knowledge and skills required for entry to practice into the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology.

While each regulated province in Canada has developed standards of practice and a codes of ethics based on their legislated requirements, the *Competency Profiles* for SLPs and audiologists were developed as part of a national project completed in partnership with regulators, professional associations and educators.

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The *Competency Profiles* are available to regulated members and to the public on the ACSLPA website.

The framework for the *Competency Profiles* was adapted from the competency framework for physicians (“the CanMEDS Roles”), which was developed by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The framework was selected in that it is evidence-based, needs-driven and outcome measured. Considerable research efforts have been made towards its development and implementation. In addition, the framework uses a common language that is shared across other healthcare professions, which supports interprofessional collaboration initiatives.

The framework is based on seven role areas:

- **Expert Role:** Includes competency requirements related to foundational principles of the profession, assessment, intervention planning, rehabilitation, population based programs and limits to practice.
- **Role as Communicator:** Includes competency requirements related to oral communication, cultural and linguistic sensitivity and documentation.
- **Role as Collaborator:** Includes competency requirements related to collaboration and relationships with clients and other professionals.
- **Role as Advocate:** Includes competency requirements related to client advocacy, client empowerment and public education.
- **Role as Scholar:** Includes competency requirements related to continuous learning, evidence-based practice and facilitating the learning of others.
- **Role as Manager:** Includes competency requirements related to practice management and workplace functioning.
- **Role as Professional:** Includes competency requirements related to professional integrity, adherence to standards and regulatory requirements and professional relationships.

Other Documents

The last set of key documents that state professional practice requirements are as follows:

- **Position Statements** set out the official position of the College on an issue or matter that is significant not only to the professions but also to outside agencies or groups.
- **Advisory Statements** address the legislated obligations that apply to SLPs and/or audiologists. They inform regulated members about legislation, provide suggestions for compliance and direct regulated members to relevant resources.

- **A Guideline** provides recommendations to regulated members that are deemed to be acceptable practice within regulatory requirements.
- **Protocols** describe criteria, activities, and procedures that should be adhered to by regulated members in the provision of specific professional services. Protocols are evidence-informed.

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These documents have been developed to support the professional practice of regulated members. They also may serve as an extension to the *Standards of Practice*. New documents are developed as required to address issues relevant to regulated members. Each of these documents are posted on the ACSLPA website; all regulated members of ACSLPA are expected to be aware of the contents and practice in compliance with documents.

Restricted Activities

Under Alberta legislation, “restricted activities” are those procedures or services that pose significant risk and require a high level of professional competence to be performed safely. Restricted activities may only be performed by persons authorized by their regulatory College to do so. Regulated SLPs and audiologists should only perform those restricted activities that they are competent to perform and that are appropriate to their area of practice.

In accordance with the *Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Profession Regulation* (Regulation) an SLP who is a Registered member of ACSLPA is authorized to perform the following restricted activities in relation to or as part of providing a health service:

- to insert air under pressure into the ear canal (i.e., when performing screening tympanometry).
- to insert or remove instruments or devices beyond the point in the nasal passages where they normally narrow (i.e., when performing flexible transnasal nasendoscopic examinations, oral/nasal pressure airflow evaluations, anterior rhinometry [static nasal pressure measures]).
- to insert or remove instruments or devices beyond the pharynx (i.e., when conducting indirect laryngoscopy and oral endoscopy; inserting or removing tracheoesophageal prostheses or devices transmurally, conducting placement/fitting of palatal lift appliances).
- to insert or remove instruments or devices into an artificial opening into the body (i.e., when inserting/removing tracheoesophageal prostheses or devices transmurally).
- to administer diagnostic imaging contrast agents (i.e., when preparing/administering barium for videofluoroscopy and performing a modified barium swallow study).

In accordance with the Regulation, an audiologist who is a Registered member of ACSLPA is authorized to perform the following restricted activities in relation to or as part of providing a health service:

- to insert liquid, air or gas under pressure into the ear canal (i.e., when performing tympanometry, videonystagmography (VNG), electrocochleography, cerumen management).
- to insert or remove instruments or devices beyond the cartilaginous portion of the ear canal (i.e., when performing cerumen management, taking probe tube microphone measurements, fitting completely in the canal hearing aids).
- to insert a substance that subsequently solidifies into the ear canal (i.e., when taking ear mold impressions).

Each restricted activity has an accompanying Restricted Activity Competency Profile that provides a description of the minimum competencies required of SLPs and audiologists for safe and effective practice. These profiles are available on the ACSLPA website.

In addition, the Regulation states the supervision requirements for students and non-authorized individuals (i.e., support personnel) who may perform restricted activities under the supervision of a registered SLP or registered audiologist. These requirements are as follows:

Supervision of Students: SLPs and audiologists may supervise students of their respective profession, who are enrolled in accredited Canadian education programs, in the performance of restricted activities. The supervising regulated member of ACSLPA must:

1. Be authorized to perform the restricted activity being supervised;
2. Have a minimum of one year of experience in performing the restricted activity; and
3. Be on site while the student performs the restricted activity and be available to assist, or if in the opinion of the supervising regulated member the student does not require such supervision, the supervising regulated member must be available for consultation while the student performs the restricted activity and must review the restricted activity performed by the student.

Supervision of Non-Authorized Individuals: SLPs and audiologists may supervise non-authorized individuals (i.e., support personnel), in the performance of restricted activities. The supervising regulated member of ACSLPA must:

1. Be authorized to perform the restricted activity being supervised;
2. Have a minimum of one year of experience in performing the restricted activity; and
3. Be physically present and available to assist the person during the performance of the restricted activity or if in the opinion of the supervising regulated member, the person does not require such supervision, the supervising regulated member must be available for consultation while the person performs the restricted activity.

Please refer to the guidelines for working with support personnel (available on the ACSLPA website) for further information regarding those activities that may be delegated to support personnel and those that may not.

Professional Competence

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The HPA defines competence as “the combined knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgment required to provide professional services”. As such, competence involves more than the knowledge and skills required for a particular profession; it encompasses the interaction and integration of knowledge, critical thinking, judgment, attitudes, skills, values and beliefs that are applied throughout delivery of professional services.

Competent professionals demonstrate the following actions and behaviors in their practice. They:

- Use and apply up-to-date knowledge and skills;
- Make sound decisions based on appropriate data;
- Communicate effectively;
- Evaluate their own practice; and
- Improve their performance based on self-reflection, applied practice and feedback from others.

The foundational knowledge and skills required to practice as an SLP or audiologist are generally present at the point of entry to practice. However, as health professionals, SLPs and audiologists have an obligation to ensure that they remain competent in their practice throughout the course of their career. This obligation is stated in the *Standards of Practice*, *Code of Ethics* and the *Competency Profiles*.

An integral part of competence is being able to recognize one’s own need for additional knowledge or skills to provide a professional service. Remaining competent as the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology evolve means that practitioners must continuously learn and apply the most current evidence-based research and information in their practice.

Whether an SLP or audiologist enters a new area of practice, returns to the work force, or continues to practice in their same position, they have a professional obligation to ensure competency in their practice. Those who do not remain competent place the safety of their clients at risk and may face complaints or lawsuits that could lead to job and/or practice permit loss.

Continuing Competence Program (CCP) Requirements

Under the HPA, ACSLPA has the legislated responsibility to establish, maintain and enforce standards for continuing competence of its members. Section 50 of the HPA states:

“50(1) A council must establish, by regulation, a continuing competence program within 5 years from the date that the schedule to this Act with respect to the profession comes into force.

(2) A continuing competence program

- a) *must provide for regulated members or categories of regulated members to maintain competence and to enhance the provision of professional services, and*
- b) *may, if authorized by the regulations, provide for practice visits of the regulated members or categories of regulated members.”*

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A continuing competence program must provide for regulated members to maintain competence and enhance the provision of professional services. In addition, it may also provide for practice visits of regulated members.

The ACSLPA CCP has been designed to ensure that SLPs and audiologists remain competent in their practice and provide ethical, safe services that meet or exceed professional standards, thereby protecting the public.

The objective of the CCP are to:

1. Support high-quality audiology and speech-language pathology services for Albertans by ensuring regulated members on the General Register engage in the program.
2. Support audiologists and SLPs in developing, maintaining and enhancing their competence through participation in reflective self-assessment of their practice and professional development activities.
3. Meet the legislative requirements of the HPA.
4. Communicate to Alberta Health and the Alberta public that regulated members on the General Register are competent and meet the competence program requirements.
5. Provide regulated members on the General Register with a formal means to document maintenance and enhancement of their professional competence.

Under the HPA, participation in the CCP is a legislated requirement and mandatory for all regulated members of ACSLPA. This includes all regulated members who have a practice permit and are listed on the General Register of the College. New regulated members, or those changing their registration status from Non-Practicing to Registered, must begin participation in the CCP upon their first registration renewal.

Under the HPA, ACSLPA is required to link renewal of practice permits to meeting the requirements of the CCP. Specifically, regulated members must meet requirements for participating in the CCP in order to renew their practice permit.

Non-compliance with the CCP may be considered unprofessional conduct, as defined in the HPA. A regulated member who fails to participate in the CCP is at risk of having conditions applied to their practice permit and/or not having their practice permit renewed, thereby not allowing them to practice. In addition, they are at risk of having a complaint of unprofessional conduct filed against them.

The ACSLPA CCP was developed and has undergone updates as required, based on current research and evidence in the area of continuing competence. The program is designed to address the

continuing competence needs of all regulated members regardless of their practice. This includes researchers, administrators, manager, educators, as well as clinicians who provide direct and indirect services to clients. The CCP is adaptable, allowing regulated members to reflect on competence as it relates to their unique practice, work environment and learning style. Submission of CCP documentation is required annually and is completed electronically as part of the on-line practice permit renewal process.

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CCP Process

The ACSLPA CCP consists of the following 5 steps:

Step one is the completion of the Self-Assessment Tool, or SAT. The SAT assists SLPs and audiologists in identifying their learning needs by assessing their practice competence in relation to the practice competencies for their profession. The SAT must be completed at least once every three years, or when practice changes.

In **step two**, based on the learning needs identified through completion of the SAT and reflection on one's own practice, regulated members will formulate at least one competence goal for the upcoming year, and identify the resources and activities needed to achieve the identified goal. It should be noted that if the practice of a regulated member changes during the course of the year such that the goal originally developed is no longer applicable, the regulated member should choose a new goal applicable to their practice that can be achieved with the competence year.

Step three is carried out through the course of the year, during which time the regulated member implements their goal and engages in various activities as planned and documented.

Step four involves completion of one of three External Feedback to Support Learning options in relation to one's competence goal for the year. The three external feedback options include a) Case Review, b) Peer Feedback, or c) Guideline/Document Review. This component of the program must be completed a minimum of once every three years.

In the **final step**, the regulated member evaluates and reflects on their competence growth, considering the way in which their practice was affected or enhanced through completion of their competence goal. In years where an individual completes an external feedback option, they are also asked to reflect on the feedback received through this process. All of this information is documented, completing the process for the year and is then submitted to the College electronically, as part of the practice permit renewal process. All steps must be completed prior to or during the practice permit renewal process.

While this provides a very general overview of the steps in the CCP process, further details and examples are available in the CCP Video Tutorial and other resources on the ACSLPA website.

CCP Annual Audit

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While each regulated member has an obligation and responsibility to maintain competence in their practice, the College has a legislated responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the CCP and each regulated member's participation in the program. In meeting this responsibility, the College has established a Competence Committee in accordance with section 10 of the *HPA*. The Competence Committee participates in an annual review of a random sample of regulated member submissions, for the purpose of a program audit. The identity of each regulated member is kept confidential during the process.

The purpose of the CCP Review is:

1. To ensure that the individual regulated member is complying with the program requirements;
2. To ensure that the College monitors, adjusts, and modifies the CCP to reflect current practice; and
3. To support regulated members in meeting the program requirements.

It should be noted that the CCP Audit does not formally measure or assess a regulated member's competence. It evaluates compliance with meeting the program requirements.

For the purpose of the annual audit, regulated members are required to retain all CCP and supporting documentation for a minimum period of five years.

Further information regarding the CCP Audit is available on the ACSLPA website. Examples are also available to assist regulated members in their CCP requirements.