

Clinical Conundrum

Addressing questions related to ethical and clinical practice issues in speech-language pathology and audiology



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Question: I was reviewing the guidelines around documentation and was unclear what the College recommendations are regarding the transportation of client “working” files in vehicles – for example, between office and school/community setting? My employer is in the process of revising our policy regarding documentation, and your advice in this area would be appreciated.

You are correct in noting that ACSLPA’s current *Clinical Documentation and Record Keeping Guideline (2011)* does not directly address this issue.

In speaking with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta (www.oipc.ab.ca), they acknowledged that there is nothing specific in Alberta legislation that addresses the issue of how to transport client files from a privacy/confidentiality perspective. Having said that, however, the OIPC talked about the use of “reasonable measures” to safeguard information. Examples include the following:

- Transporting only the information that is required for assessment/intervention purposes;
- Keeping the information with you whenever possible;
- Ensuring that if files need to be left in a vehicle, that the vehicle is locked and the files are hidden from plain view (e.g., stored in the trunk, under a seat, or covered in a bag).

There was some discussion as to whether files should be kept in a locked box for the purpose of transportation, however this was not deemed to be a requirement. The OIPC did recommend that employers establish a policy and procedure for staff regarding the issue of file transportation.

We welcome your thoughts on this or any other clinical conundrum! Readers are encouraged to submit both their comments and their ethical clinical issues in question format to Susan Rafaat (director2@acslpa.ab.ca) for SLP-related issues and to Holly Gusnowsky (director1@acslpa.ab.ca) for audiology-related issues.