

# What is a Speech-Language Pathologist?

**Speech-language pathologists** (SLPs) are professionals who have a master's, doctorate, or equivalent degree in speech-language pathology and specialize in the prevention, assessment, diagnosis and management of communication and swallowing disorders. SLPs work directly with clients of all ages and their families/caregivers. Certain services may be provided by Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPAs), who work under the supervision of an SLP.



In Alberta, SLPs are recognized by the following protected titles/designations: *speech-language pathologist*, *speech pathologist*, *speech therapist*, *SLP* and *R.SLP*. SLPs who have completed a doctorate degree may also use the protected title Doctor or Dr. when providing a health service.

## What Do SLPs Do?

SLPs work in a variety of settings including public practice settings such as schools, preschools, hospitals, community health centres, long-term care centres and nursing homes. They may also work in private practice in both office and home environments. SLPs often work in collaboration with other health care professionals as part of a team. SLPs provide a broad range of professional services including the following:

Assessment, diagnosis and management of:

- Speech disorders, assisting clients in improving articulation (pronunciation, including accent modification); fluency disorders (stuttering); and voice disorders, which relate to vocal quality, pitch and volume;
- Language disorders, which relate to the ability to express oneself and understand verbal and written communications;
- Cognitive communication disorders, assisting clients in improving problem-solving, reasoning, memory and organization skills required to communicate effectively;
- Swallowing disorders, ensuring that clients consume food consistencies that are safe and do not place them at risk for choking or having food/liquids collect in the lungs;
- Education and supervision of students, professionals and SLPAs;
- Academic and clinical research; and
- Administration, management and policy development.

## Why Are Speech-Language Pathology Services Important?

One in six Canadians has a speech, language or hearing problem. This means that one in six Canadians has difficulty understanding or being understood by other people.

The ability to communicate effectively is essential to maintaining quality of life, whether it be when interacting in the workplace, managing the academic and communication requirements of a classroom, or having a conversation with family and friends.



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Being able to communicate effectively is critical in the technologically advanced global economy of today and can impact the ability of an individual to maintain an adequate standard of living.

Untreated swallowing problems place an individual at risk for malnutrition, dehydration and pulmonary compromise. The ability to swallow safely and effectively leads to improved health and well-being. Early identification and management of communication and swallowing disorders is key to long-term success.



For more information about speech-language pathology and how to access services,  
please visit: [www.acslpa.ca](http://www.acslpa.ca)