



Alberta College of
Speech-Language Pathologists
and Audiologists

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Advisory Statement:

Considerations for Discontinuing Speech-Language Pathology Services Due to Layoff

April 15, 2020



Considerations for Discontinuing Speech-Language Pathology Services due to Layoff

Advisory Statement: *Addresses the legislated obligations that apply to speech-language pathologists and/or audiologists. Advisory Statements inform regulated members about legislation, provide suggestions for compliance, and direct members to relevant resources.*

The practice of speech-language pathology is a professional service regulated under the *Health Professions Act (HPA)*. Regardless of their practice setting, speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are regulated health professionals under the *HPA* and as such, they have an obligation to meet professional requirements stated within the *HPA*, the *Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Profession Regulation*, ACSLPA's *Code of Ethics* and ACSLPA's *Standards of Practice*.

During a time of significant service interruption, including periods of temporary or permanent layoff, adherence to the following standards is paramount to ensure competent, effective, and safe client care.

Client Discharge Considerations

According to ACSLPA's *Standards of Practice*^{*}, SLPs have the following obligations when terminating services to clients:

- counsel, educate, and facilitate the client's or client's caregiver's participation in their care post-discharge,
- implement discharge planning which may include referral to other health care providers and/or education for clients and client's caregivers, and
- refer clients as appropriate to obtain required resources and services post discharge.

In the case of a sudden disruption in services, SLPs and audiologists are expected to consider their caseload on a case-by-case basis to determine:

- how best to communicate with clients and/or their families,
- key messages in relation to assessment and/or intervention, including current communication, or feeding and swallowing status/functioning,
- recommendations for future intervention, including referral to other service providers, as appropriate,
- any areas of concern that may warrant future intervention or monitoring, and
- completion of brief and relevant documentation to complete the client's health record.

Sudden and significant service disruptions are often unanticipated and may involve time limitations, therefore SLPs must use their professional judgement and clinical decision-making abilities to identify priorities, determine the most appropriate responses based on the situation at hand, and do the best they can to provide effective discharge management under unusual circumstances.

^{*} ACSLPA Standards of Practice, Standard 1.3, indicators (h), (i) and (j).

SLP Assistant Considerations

Assessment, diagnosis, and rehabilitation aimed at preventing communication, oral motor, and pharyngeal dysfunctions and disorders is the regulated practice of speech-language pathology and should not be undertaken by assistants or support personnel without adequate supervision by a regulated SLP.

In the case of a sudden disruption in services provided by a regulated SLP, direct client care addressing intervention goals developed and overseen by a supervising SLP or audiologist should cease. Communication strategies that assistants have previously been trained to implement and that are well established for use with clients may be continue to be used. New interventions and changes to treatment plans should not occur without adequate supervision by a regulated SLP.

According to ACSLPA's *Standards of Practice*** , SLPs have the following obligations in relation to supervision of support personnel (aides, assistants, volunteers, employees, etc.):

- carry out direct and indirect supervision in compliance with relevant legislation and guidelines to ensure safe and competent service delivery,
- assess the role of and services provided by supervised personnel and monitor client outcomes, and
- inform employers and clients of the need to discontinue some services by assistants when there is insufficient supervision available to ensure minimum practice standards can be met.

Requirements for the adequate supervision of assistants can be found in ACSLPA's [Standards of Practice](#) and in ACSLPA's [SLP Guidelines for Working with Support Personnel](#).

** ACSLPA Standards of Practice, Standard 4.4, indicators (e), (f) and (g).