



Alberta College of
Speech-Language Pathologists
and Audiologists

Guideline:

Providing Services Under Eased Pandemic Restrictions

In effect: July 1, 2021

On September 15, 2021, the Government of Alberta announced new [Covid-19 public health actions](#), which came into effect on September 16th. This is an evolving situation and revisions to the guidance in this document will be forthcoming. Regulated members, please refer to an email that was sent to you on September 16th for additional information.



*Guideline for Providing Services Under
Eased Pandemic Restrictions*

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Guideline: *Provides recommendations to regulated members that are deemed to be acceptable practice within regulatory requirements. Regulated members are afforded reasonable use of their professional judgment in the application of a guideline.*

Overview

Alberta's "Open for Summer" plan will ease many restrictions across the province. However, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses are still present in the population and may continue to pose a health risk to individuals. As regulated healthcare providers, diligence must still be exercised. Dealing with COVID-19 will be part of regular practice for all healthcare professionals for the foreseeable future, and lessons learned through the pandemic should support ACSLPA members in their practice on an ongoing basis.

This guidance has been developed to provide direction to regulated ACSLPA members who practice outside of the public health system. It is important to note that municipalities may also implement bylaws and rules such as indoor masking which could affect SLP and audiology practice.

ACSLPA members should keep themselves up-to-date and informed on COVID-19, including any public health orders such as quarantine/isolation requirements, masking requirements or any other requirements put forth by public health officials and their respective municipality.

The following is intended to guide ACSLPA members in their practice in Stage 3 and onward. Note that guidance is subject to change.

Requirements to Practice – Stage 3 Reopening

ACSLPA members work in a variety of contexts/settings and therefore need to remain aware of any public health orders/guidance applicable to their employment setting.

Immunization and Immunization Status

ACSLPA members are encouraged to be immunized against COVID-19.

ACSLPA members are expected to comply with ACSLPA's position statement: "[Vaccine Hesitancy](#)".

Members should only take a vaccine history from clients if the immunization history is relevant to the role/treatment approach. Vaccine history should not be used to determine a client's eligibility for service.

- In the absence of knowing a client's vaccine history, it may be prudent to assume clients are not vaccinated. Therefore, members should take precautions (PPE) based on the client's response to a point of care risk assessment.

ACSLPA members may be asked about their own immunization status by clients. Vaccine history is personal health information and members will need to decide if they wish to disclose this information to clients.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses represent a biological hazard in workplaces. As such, ACSLPA members who are employers must make efforts to:

1. Eliminate the hazard where possible.
2. Control the hazard when elimination is not possible.
3. Provide for proper use of PPE when the hazard cannot be controlled.

Services should be postponed if risks cannot be appropriately managed/controlled. Controlling the hazard may include maintenance of physical distancing, barriers, rigorous infection prevention control practices and/or the use of PPE.

Additional information about OHS requirements and legislation can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/occupational-health-safety.aspx>.

ACSLPA Members who are employees, must also follow their employer policies and guidance related to COVID-19 and OHS.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

ACSLPA members are expected to maintain good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette in all settings, regardless of the pandemic status. Appropriate hand hygiene is never optional.

Hand hygiene can be completed using alcohol-based hand rub (minimum 60% alcohol content), or through hand washing using soap and water. Washing with soap and water is required when hands are visibly soiled.

ACSLPA members should encourage clients to perform hand hygiene and should ensure hand hygiene solutions (soap and water/hand sanitizer) are available to staff, volunteers, and clients.

For more information see <https://www.alberta.ca/infection-prevention-and-control.aspx>.

Infection Prevention Control (IPC)

Members should maintain rigor in their IPC practices and are expected to comply with the ACSLPA Advisory Statement “[Infection Prevention Control: Single-use and Reusable Medical Devices](#)”. These are best practices and must be in place regardless of the pandemic. This advisory links to additional information on the Government of Alberta website and requires members to follow the Alberta Health IPC Standards.

Point of Care Risk Assessments

Continued screening of providers (self-screening) and clients for illness and quarantine requirements is strongly encouraged.

Members should consider delaying services when either the client or they themselves are experiencing illness.

Measures put in place should be commensurate with the PCRA. This includes the use of PPE. Where clients present while ill, full PPE is warranted (gloves, medical mask, gown, eye protection). Full PPE is essential if working with individuals who have or are suspect cases of COVID-19.

Masks

Consistent with the [Public Health Disease Management Guidelines](#), ACSLPA strongly recommends the use of procedural/medical-grade masks when providing direct client services or when unable to maintain a 2-metre distance from clients and coworkers. The Public Health Disease Management Guidelines indicate that use of a medical mask, eye protection and hand hygiene practices are considered when determining the need for quarantine of close contacts. If required to quarantine, income may be lost.

As in previous guidance, the following may be options for use where the mouth and lips need to be visualized by clients:

- Medical mask through MedSup Canada, model number MFTW-15-M1. Continue to exercise due diligence if choosing to use this mask; this mask would not be sufficient if working with individuals who are sick or who are on contact and droplet precautions or who have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Face shields may be used as a substitute for a face mask when specific conditions can be met. Members should continue to document their rationale if using a face shield instead of a medical-grade mask.

On June 22, 2021, Dr. Hinshaw announced that continuous masking will continue to be required in continuing care and acute care settings. Masks will also be required on public transit, in taxis and in ride-share situations.

Note that some municipalities are maintaining mask bylaws and ACSLPA members need to inform themselves of these bylaws and the impact on their practice/clinic setting.

Physical Distancing

Members are encouraged to arrange their space and waiting areas to continue maximize distance between individuals. Maintenance of 2 metres of physical separation is encouraged, including provider/client, client/client and worker/worker.

Close Contacts

[Public Health Disease Management Guidelines](#)

ACSLPA members are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Alberta Health Public Health Disease Management Guidelines.

These guidelines lay out the “case management” requirements and will help ACSLPA members make informed decisions related to their practice setting and determining precautions.

These guidelines lay out how close contacts are managed. For example, immunization status is used to inform public health as to whether a person is required to quarantine. ACSLPA members who are a close contact and who are not fully immunized are likely to be quarantined for 14 days, which may result in a loss of income.

ACSLPA remains committed to providing guidance to help its members navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. If additional directives are received from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health, more information will be provided to members. ACSLPA members are strongly encouraged to check the [COVID-19 information](#) on the ACSLPA website frequently as information is subject to change.