



Alberta College of
Speech-Language Pathologists
and Audiologists

Advisory Statement:

COVID-19 Management

In effect: April 20, 2023

Please note: This Advisory Statement is subject to amendment should any updated public health advice become available



COVID-19 Management

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Advisory Statement: *Provides direction to ensure regulated members have information to comply with legislation, standards, and other minimum requirements.*

Overview

On June 14, 2022, the Government of Alberta lifted all mandatory COVID-19 public health measures, as the province moved to bring COVID-19 management in line with the management of other respiratory illnesses.

As such, effective June 14, 2022, apart from the expectations around infection prevention and control outlined in ACSLPA's [Standard of Practice Area 4.1 Safety and Risk Management](#), ACSLPA has no **mandatory** requirements of regulated members with respect to the management of COVID-19 while providing professional services.

Recommendations for minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infection while providing professional services can be found below.

ACSLPA regulated members are advised that they should keep themselves apprised of and continue to follow any applicable employer or client policy regarding COVID-19 management.

Immunization and Immunization Status

ACSLPA members are encouraged to be immunized against COVID-19, including getting a booster dose of the vaccine when appropriate.

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 based on the 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.

Isolation

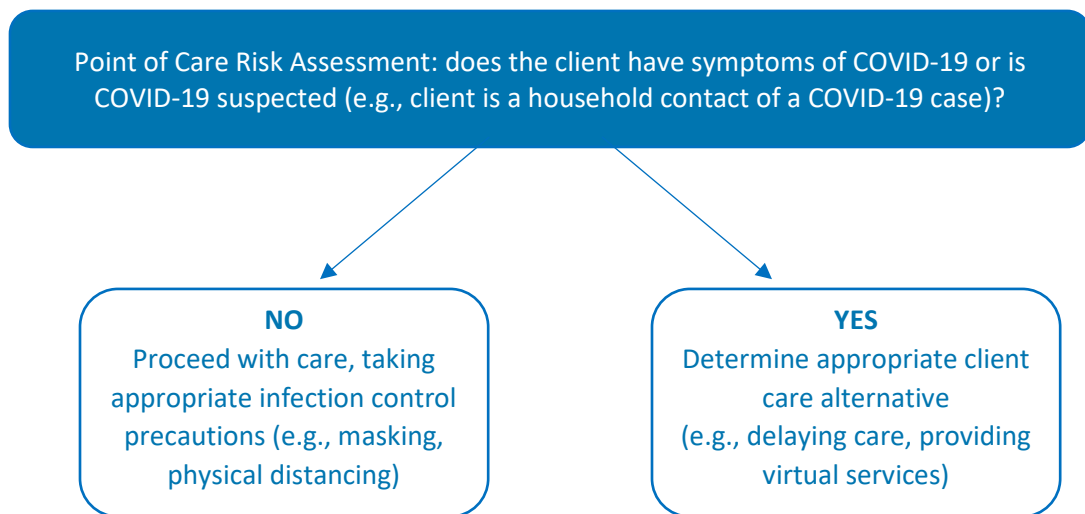
Isolation for individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or for those who have tested positive for COVID-19 is no longer legally required in Alberta. As per [AHS guidance](#), individuals with respiratory virus symptoms (including symptoms of COVID-19), or those who test positive for any respiratory illness are advised to stay home until:

- All symptoms have improved,
- They feel well enough to resume normal activities, and
- They have been fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications.

Point of Care Risk Assessments

Continued screening of providers (self-screening) and clients for illness and quarantine requirements is encouraged. Members are encouraged to use appropriate infection control measures, or delay services, or provide virtual services when they or their clients are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

[AHS Guidelines](#) recommend alternative client care options when clients present with symptoms of COVID-19 or if COVID-19 is suspected:



A sample point of care risk assessment can be found in Appendix A.

Masking & Physical Distancing

Healthcare workers, including SLP's and Audiologists, are encouraged to continue to use surgical or procedure masks during in-person interactions with clients where point-of-care risk assessments deem necessary. If masking is deemed necessary, ACSLPA recommends that members use at least a surgical or procedural type mask.

Individuals who are experiencing respiratory virus symptoms should wear a mask for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (even if symptoms have resolved or improved) when in indoor settings with other individuals.

Personal Risk Assessment

Regulated members are encouraged to continue to assess and manage their personal risk, and to continue to use precautions that serve their needs. Members should consider their setting, individual health and wellness factors, and comfort level when assessing their risk. Factors that increase COVID-19 risk include:

- Not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19,
- Regularly interacting with individuals who are not vaccinated and who are at a high risk of severe health outcomes from COVID-19,
- Attending crowded indoor spaces (e.g., schools), and
- Having risk factors for severe health outcomes from COVID-19.

Regulated members who have any of the risks above are encouraged to consider additional precautions, like minimizing their contact with any individuals exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or continuing to use a face mask.

Members are advised to document the use of masking, physical distancing, and any other strategies they are using when interacting with clients and families along with the accompanying rationale. In situations where the clinician's personal choice and/or point-of-care risk assessment warrants the use of a mask and the client is seeking unmasked services, the clinician is expected to provide the client with suggestions of alternative service options. Documentation of this conversation is also recommended.

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.

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 prevalence of COVID-19. 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 that must be in place regardless of the current prevalence of COVID-19. This advisory statement links to additional information on the Government of Alberta website and requires members to follow the Alberta Health IPC Standards.

In Closing

ACSLPA remains committed to providing guidance to help its members navigate the risks associated with COVID-19. If additional directives are received from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and/or Alberta Health, more information will be provided to members.

Members should contact the SLP Practice Advisor at slp@acslpa.ca, or the Audiology Practice Advisor at audiology@acslpa.ca if they have particular service delivery circumstances that they would like to discuss.

Appendix A

Client Pre-Screening/Point of Care Risk Assessment Questions

These questions should be asked of clients in preparation for their appointment and again at the time they arrive for their appointment.

Clients should be encouraged to answer the questions truthfully for themselves and for any other person who may be accompanying them to their appointment.

		YES	NO
1.	Do you have any of the symptoms below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever (greater than 38.0 C) • Cough • Shortness of Breath / Difficulty Breathing • Sore throat • Runny nose / Nasal Congestion • Chills • Painful swallowing • Feeling Unwell / Fatigued • Nausea / Vomiting / Diarrhea • Unexplained loss of appetite • Loss of sense of taste or smell • Muscle / Joint aches • Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Have you been a household contact of a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Have you, or anyone in your household been in contact in the last 14 days with someone who is being investigated or confirmed to have a case of COVID-19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Have you, or anyone in your household travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Are you currently being investigated as having a suspect case of COVID-19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Have you tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 10 days?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>