

Who are Speech-Language Pathologists?

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are autonomous professionals whose practice is regulated in Ontario by the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Act*. SLPs have specific knowledge and skills in human communication and swallowing disorders, and are integral members of the interdisciplinary/educational team.

What services do Speech-Language Pathologists provide?

SLPs' expertise includes identification, evaluation and treatment of congenital, developmental and acquired communication and swallowing disorders; counseling clients and families; training and educating clients, families, students, and providers; program/service development and evaluation; and research. SLPs provide services in a broad range of settings. They may provide services to clients of all ages, from infants to elderly.

Community-Based SLP Health Services

Speech-language pathology is well suited to community-based service — it enables skills to be generalized in the environment in which they are used. SLP services are client-focused and are delivered in a variety of service-delivery patterns, which (depending on mandates) may include:

- direct therapy: the SLP works directly with clients on individual goals established for each client
- mediator model: the SLP trains a mediator to provide a client's program
- consultation model: the SLP acts as a resource, and provides strategies to facilitate positive change in the client

What information is helpful when you request Speech-Language Pathology services?

- a description of the primary concern and reason for requesting services
- medical, social, academic, vocational and other relevant history
- assessments pending; pertinent reports/results from previous assessments (SLP, audiology, vision, ENT, videofluoroscopic swallowing assessment (modified barium swallow), occupational therapy, physiotherapy)
- educational reports (from psychologists, educational consultants, classroom teachers), including whether an IEP has been created

For additional information about speech-language pathology or audiology, contact our professional association at 416-920-3676 or visit www.osla.on.ca.



SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS' ROLES & SERVICES

COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH CARE



When should a client be referred to a Speech-Language Pathologist?

Community-based SLP services are offered to individuals of all ages in accordance with program eligibility criteria. *These criteria may vary across Community Care Access Centres.* To ensure early intervention, a referral should be made as soon as a concern is identified.

Pediatric In-Home Services for Children with Complex Health Conditions (e.g. following illness, trauma, surgery, being tube-fed)

Refer to an SLP an infant or child who:

- is having difficulty with feeding and swallowing; requires oral-motor stimulation
- has developed speech and/or language difficulties (does not speak clearly, has difficulty expressing wants or needs, or understanding others)
- has sustained trauma to the head or neck, causing speech, language or voice difficulties

If providers, during a home visit, notice other speech, language or voice problems in paediatric clients or their siblings, they should immediately direct the family to the local Preschool Speech and Language Program. These programs can provide developmental S-L milestones. For concerns regarding hearing, direct clients to a local audiologist (the SLP can assist with this).

Adult Services (e.g. for adults who have suffered stroke, brain injury, have a neurological condition such as Parkinson's disease, or are palliative clients). These services are provided in the client's home, nursing home or long-term care facility.

Refer to an SLP an adult who has resulting difficulty:

- swallowing foods or liquids (excessively slow eating; coughing, choking, or "gurgly" voice associated with eating or drinking; associated recent weight loss or repeated bouts of pneumonia)
- understanding language (any change in ability to follow directions or understand verbal, gestural or written language)
- producing speech and/or language (any change in ability to speak clearly, retrieve words, construct sentences, express ideas, use gestures)
- interacting with family/friends, discussing events, using humour
- with job performance (following directions, interacting appropriately with colleagues)
- with cognitive tasks (reasoning, problem-solving, memory for words, organization)
- that requires augmentative/alternative communication.

School Health Support Services (depending on local mandates, may be provided in other than school settings, including home).

The school health support program does not treat language-based difficulties as the primary need. Services are provided based on local agreements between CCACs and school boards with respect to *Policy/ Program Memorandum No. 81* (1984) and the *Interministerial Guidelines for the Provision of Speech and Language Services* (1988).

Referrals to the School Health Support SLP include when a school aged child/adolescent:

- has difficulty speaking fluently (stuttering, cluttering, rhythm)
- has difficulty with: voice quality (hoarse/ breathy/strident); voice resonance (hyper/ hyponasal); voice pitch or volume; loss of voice; or has had/will have vocal cord surgery
- demonstrates phonology/articulation difficulties or apraxia (oral motor)
- is being teased about the difficulty or is avoiding curriculum choices/participation in class
- has little or no functional communication skills and requires support to use an augmentative or alternative method of communication
- has difficulty with feeding/swallowing.