

Scope of Practice for Audiology

Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)

Statement of Purpose

This document provides a general description of the scope of practice for the profession of audiology in Canada, highlighting the broad range of services it provides. The document is intended as a resource for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, health care professionals, regulatory bodies, government agencies, third party insurers, educators, consumers and the general public.

The scope of practice document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of activities and some may not fall into the exclusive domain of an audiologist. Practice activities that are related to emerging clinical, technological and scientific developments are not precluded from consideration as part of the scope of practice of an audiologist and such innovations and advances will result in periodic revision of this document. It is recognized that individual providers may limit their practice by age or type of disorder. Additionally, professionals may have the expertise to provide services that do not appear in this document. In some provinces/territories where the profession is regulated, there are controlled acts that limit the scope of practice and practice guidelines have been developed. Audiologists are ethically bound to provide services that are consistent with the scope of their competence, education and experience.

Definition

Audiologists are hearing health professionals who identify, diagnose and manage individuals with peripheral or central hearing loss, tinnitus and balance disorders. In some provinces/territories, audiologists are governed by a regulatory body and must meet regulatory requirements to practice.

Audiologists provide a number of different services related to hearing, tinnitus and balance for the individuals they serve. These services may include:

- Assessment of hearing and balance disorders, which may involve screening, identification, evaluation and diagnosis.
- Intervention for hearing and balance disorders, which may involve promotion, prevention, counselling, treatment, consultation, management, (re)habilitation and education.
- Education and supervision of students and professionals, including supportive personnel.
- Consultation with and referral to other professionals.
- Research.
- University and/or college education and training.
- Administration, management and policy development.

Educational Requirements

A master's degree in audiology (or equivalent) is the current entry to practice requirement in all jurisdictions in Canada.



Roles and Responsibilities

Audiologists may work alone or as part of an inter-professional team to help individuals of all ages to maximize their hearing health. As such, they provide a broad range of services that include the following activities:

- Clinical and/or instrumental screening, assessment, identification, diagnosis and treatment of:
 - Hearing disorders in infants, children and adults involving both peripheral and central pathways of hearing;
 - Auditory processing disorders;
 - Tinnitus, hyperacusis and misophonia; and
 - Balance disorders.
- Assessment, selection, dispensing, validation, verification and servicing of hearing aids.
- Assessment, selection and development of other appropriate hearing assistive and (re)habilitative strategies for individuals with hearing impairment, auditory processing, balance dysfunction, tinnitus and/or related disorders. This could include cochlear implants, assistive technology such as FM systems, speech reading classes, tinnitus re-training and vestibular (re)habilitation.
- Intraoperative monitoring.
- Promotion of hearing health.
- Prevention, counselling and education services to clients, families, caregivers, other professionals and the public regarding all aspects of hearing and balance function.
- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with hearing, auditory processing, tinnitus and balance disorders and populations that are at risk.
- Consultation, assessment and management of educational, workplace and other public acoustical environments.
- Consultation with government, industry and community agencies regarding improvements to noise legislation and implementation of environmental and occupational hearing conservation programs.
- Consultation with worker's compensation boards and Veterans Affairs Canada regarding criteria and determination of pension/benefits for individuals with hearing loss and related disorders.
- Medical legal consultation including forensic audiology.
- Consultation with and referral to other professionals.
- Inter-professional collaboration.
- Case management and coordination of service delivery.
- Supervision and training of supportive personnel.
- Education, supervision and mentoring of students.
- University and/or college education and training related to hearing, balance and other related disorders.
- Research in the areas of hearing, balance and other related disorders.
- Screening for speech and language development for the purpose of hearing evaluation and/or the identification of individuals with other communication disorders that may require intervention.
- Cerumen management.

Practice Settings

Audiologists work in a variety of health and education settings, including but not limited to hospitals, public health units, community health centres, schools, private practice, industrial settings, hearing-aid and cochlear implant manufacturers, professional associations, universities, colleges and nursing homes. Audiologists may function independently or within an inter-professional framework, collaborating with other professionals such as speech-language pathologists, physicians, nurses, teachers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists as well as supportive personnel.

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