

Issues

- 1) Do audiologists and speech-language pathologists have the required education, skills and competencies to make and communicate audiology and speech-language pathology related diagnoses?
- 2) Do audiologists and speech-language pathologists contravene *The Psychologist's Act, 1997* by making and communicating audiology and speech-language pathology related diagnoses?

Statement

Based on knowledge and skills developed at their educational institutes, forming and communicating audiology and speech-language pathology diagnoses falls within the normal scope of practice for audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

Being as forming and communicating diagnoses falls within the normal scope of practice for audiologists and speech-language pathologists, they do not contravene *The Psychologist's Act, 1997* by making and communicating audiology and speech-language pathology related diagnoses.

Formation and communication of speech and/or language disorder found in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) must be team-based and reference the team's findings and other team members' reports.

Background

The Psychologist's Act, 1997

- According to *The Psychologist's Act, 1997*:
 - 23(1)** An authorized practice is the communication of a diagnosis identifying, as the cause of a person's symptoms, a neuropsychological disorder or a psychologically-based psychotic, neurotic or personality disorder.
 - (2) No person shall perform an authorized practice described in subsection (1) in the course of providing services to an individual unless the person is a practising member authorized by council pursuant to his or her licence or the bylaws to perform that authorized practice.
 - (3) Prior to authorizing a member to perform an authorized practice, the council may require that member to successfully complete any examinations as may be prescribed in the bylaws.
 - (4) This section does not apply to a duly qualified medical practitioner.
- This had been interpreted by the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists to include speech and language diagnoses. According to their interpretation, a speech-language pathologist who makes and communicates a diagnosis without including the signature of a psychologist in the report is in violation of 23(2).

Canadian Alliance of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Regulators (CAASPR)

- In 2018 CAASPR approved national competency documents for each profession.

- The National Audiology Competency Profile and the National Speech-Language Pathology Competency Profiles describe the minimum abilities required of an audiologist or speech-language pathologist entering practice in the regulated provinces of Canada.
- The documents were formed using feedback from Canadian universities with accredited audiology and speech-language pathology educational programs.
- According to Section 1.2, “Clinical Expert” from the SLP document:

g. Analyze and interpret assessment results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Analyze formal and informal assessment results. ii. Interpret the data accurately. iii. Formulate conclusions regarding the client’s diagnosis, abilities, resources and needs.
h. Develop and share recommendations based on assessment results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop evidence-informed recommendations, including potential referrals to other professionals, based on the assessment findings. ii. Discuss the assessment results, recommendations and implications with the client and other relevant individuals, as permitted by client.

- According to Section 1.2, “Clinical Expert” from the audiology document:

g. Analyze and interpret assessment results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Interpret the assessment data using knowledge, skill and judgment. ii. Integrate the data and formulate a conclusion (e.g., regarding site of lesion, functionality, reliability, needs of the client).
h. Develop and share recommendations based on the assessment results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop recommendations for intervention, including appropriate technology, modifications to the acoustic environment and/or referrals. ii. Discuss the assessment findings, recommendations and implications with the client and other relevant individuals and/or organizations.

Legal Opinion

- In 2020, SASLPA sought legal counsel regarding this issue and received the following response:

“...it is my opinion that a licensed member of a profession, whether the governing legislation does, or does not, define a scope of practice for members of that profession, does not commit an offence under other professional regulatory legislation if what they do falls within the normal scope of practice for members of their profession.

I think that a reasonable interpretation of *The Psychologists Act, 1997* and *The Speech Language Pathologist and Audiologist Act* is that a speech-language pathologist does not commit an offence under *The Psychologists Act, 1997* if what the speech-language pathologist does falls within the normal scope of practice of a speech-language pathologist.”

Going Forward

- The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers have added language to *The Social Workers Act* that endorses them to make diagnoses:

Requirements for endorsement

21.1 The council may grant an endorsement to a practising member authorizing that member to engage in the practice of diagnosis if the member produces evidence establishing to the satisfaction of the council that he or she:

- (a) has paid the prescribed fees;
- (b) is a practising member; and

(c) has complied with the bylaws with respect to the requirements that must be met and criteria that must be satisfied for the granting of an endorsement.

- The SASLPA council will consider requesting that similar language be added to *The Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Act*. If approved by council, the request will be added to the annual request to amend the Act.

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