CSASK

Supportive Personnel – Audiometric Technician Practice Guideline

DEFINITION

An audiometric technician is an individual who, following on the job and/or academic training, provides clinical services as planned and/or directed and supervised by a registered audiologist. These positions are paid positions whose primary responsibility is provision of audiometric services as described in these guidelines.

QUALIFICATIONS

The following minimum qualifications should be considered in selecting individuals for employment as audiometric technicians:

1. A high school diploma or the equivalent.
2. Communication skills adequate for the tasks assigned.
3. Ability to demonstrate an attitude of respect and sensitivity toward clients with widely varied backgrounds, abilities, socioeconomic and educational status.
4. Flexibility in adapting style of presentation to suit the varied needs of clients being served.
5. Completion of an appropriate training program designed and conducted by a qualified audiologist, according to the needs and resources of the work setting: e.g. formal course work, workshops, direct observation, distance educations programming, etc.

Additional qualifications may be determined according to the needs of the program and the population being served.

Examples of Duties an Audiometric Technician might engage in:

- perform basic audiometry under the supervision of a qualified Audiologist. (Basic audiometry includes pure tone air/bone conduction testing, basic speech testing, acoustic impedance testing). These services may be provided for school age children to adults.
- be specifically trained to be employed in hearing screening programs administered by a qualified Audiologist.
- assist the Audiologist with the testing of infants, pre-school (i.e. 0-6 years) and difficult-to-test clients.
- perform hearing aid evaluations on adults.
- take earmold impressions and make modifications.
- conduct minor hearing aid repairs and modifications.
- provide description of audiogram and basic audiometric findings.

Examples of the duties an Audiometric Technician might not engage in:

- administration of diagnostic tests and site of lesion testing, including pre-school pediatric testing and/or pediatric soundfield testing.
- rehabilitative counselling or transmission of diagnostic/site of lesion information to the client, client's family or other professionals.
- development of treatment programs.
- hearing aid selection.
- decision-making regarding the initiation, duration, or termination of treatment.
- referral of a client to other professionals or agencies.
- composing of clinical reports, except for progress notes to be held in the client's file.
- hearing aid evaluations on children.

TRAINING OF AUDIOMETRIC TECHNICIAN

Training procedures will vary according to local needs and resources available. It may be provided through formal/informal workshops, observations, texts, and on the job training. Appropriate areas of training may include any or all of the following:

1. A general introduction to the field of Audiology, specifically information regarding patterns of normal speech, language and hearing development, characteristics of specific disorders/delays and related difficulties which may influence communication skills (speech-language, hearing, behavioral problems, physical and emotional difficulties).
2. Orientation to the work setting including personnel, materials and equipment.
3. A review of policies and procedures related to confidentiality, the referral process, and other relevant information appropriate to the work setting.
4. Discussion of the specific characteristics of the individuals being treated, focusing on testing and on hearing aid fitting procedures, appropriate hearing aids and accessories, methods of record keeping and appropriate follow-up (i.e. assisting devices, re-evaluation schedule, aural rehabilitation program, etc.).
5. Overview of professional ethics and their application to the technician's activities.

Because training in clinical management procedures should be ongoing to take advantage of additions to the information base of the profession, it is highly recommended that the technician be afforded continuing education opportunities.

SUPERVISION

The amount and type of supervision necessary will vary from that for a Speech Assistant because of the nature of the work!

Before independently supervising an audiometric technician, the Audiologist should have a minimum of one year experience in the related work setting with previous supervisory experience an asset. Further training in supervisory skills could be made available to an audiologist when introducing support personnel to an employment setting.
The duties of an audiometric technician or technicians must be contingent upon the availability of, and access to, a registered audiologist to carry out the required training and supervision. Employers are encouraged to contact CSASK for direction on interim supervisory coverage, if required. The training and supervisory requirements would be included within the audiologist's job description and sufficient time provided for the completion of these duties.

The maximum number of technicians supervised by one professional may vary in relation to:

1. tasks assigned to the technician.
2. time required of the professional in the direct provision of clinical services. Additionally, because of the time required for training and supervision, it will be necessary to reduce the numbers of clients directly served by the professional in relation to the number of technicians being supervised.
3. The following are guidelines for the supervision of technicians which should include:
    - Direct observation of a minimum of one in every ten clinical contacts. Direct observations should be documented and should include information regarding the quality of the technician's performance.
    - Indirect observations on one in every five clinical contacts. Indirect observations may include a variety of methods such as audio and/or videotape recordings, telephone communications, monitoring or numerical data collection (e.g. records, charts), or other means agreed upon by the supervisor and the technician.

An alternate schedule of direct/indirect observations which differs from the above may be developed by the supervising audiologist in response to the particular needs or the work unit.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AUDIOLOGIST

The Audiologist will:

- be registered with CSASK
- design, implement and modify individual clinical service requirements.
- provide director on-site supervision of the audiometric technician as stipulated in the supervision guidelines
- conduct regularly scheduled meetings in conjunction with each on-site supervisory visit. These meetings may be held more frequently and additional training provided, if necessary.
- be accessible to the audiometric technician to discuss specific concerns whenever necessary
- review client cases and individual requirements to determine appropriate follow-up.
- ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the audiometric technician and supervising Audiologist are clearly defined in written format and available to all personnel in a particular work setting.
- ensure that the training, qualifications, roles and responsibilities of the audiometric technician are clearly outlined for the client and/or responsible party
- obtain appropriate consent before allowing a technician to provide treatment for an individual.

This document was based in part on the following: CASLPA/ACOA Guidelines for Supportive Personnel and SHANS Guidelines for Supportive Personnel.

CSASK GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTIVE PERSONNEL

The utilization of supportive personnel in Saskatchewan should be undertaken, whenever possible, within these guidelines developed and recommended by CSASK. They are, however, meant to be guidelines only and should be interpreted in such context. CSASK recognizes that strict adherence to these recommendations may not be feasible in all work settings throughout the province and some modifications of the guidelines might be necessary in order to accommodate individual situations. Such license may be taken at the professional discretion of the supervising speech-language pathologist (in case of speech assistants), or at the discretion of the supervising audiologist (in the case of the audiometric technicians).

These guidelines represent the latest modifications to the DRAFT Guidelines discussed during the forum held March 23, 1991, at CSASK's Annual Conference. They are hereby transferred from DRAFT to official status and endorsed by CSASK.