CSASK

Supportive Personnel – Speech Assistant Practice Guideline

DEFINITION

A Speech Assistant is an individual who, following on the job and/or academic training, provides services that are planned and supervised by a registered speech-language pathologist. This position is a paid position whose primary responsibility is provision of speech assistance as described in these guidelines.

QUALIFICATIONS

The following minimum qualifications should be considered in selecting individuals for employment as Speech Assistants:

1. A high school diploma or equivalent.
2. Communications skills adequate for the tasks assigned. Each should be literate in the language to be used in the program with the client*.
   *Throughout this test, a definition of "client" is relative to the treatment setting: may refer to a child, student and/or adult, and may encompass the client's family, responsible party, etc.
3. Ability to demonstrate an attitude of respect and sensibility 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 speech-language pathologist, according to the needs and resources of the work setting: e.g. formal course work, workshops, direct observations, etc.

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

ROLE OF THE SPEECH ASSISTANT

The specific role of the Speech Assistant will be influenced by the particular needs of the clinical speech-language program, and will be determined by the speech-language pathologist responsible for supervising the assistant. The Speech Assistant may engage only in those duties planned, designed and supervised, by the responsible speech-language pathologist.

An assistant can carry out specific components of the speech-language program if the assistant has the necessary training and skill, and if the speech-language pathology supervises appropriate completion of all the tasks assigned to the assistant.

Examples of Duties a Speech Therapy Technician Might Engage in:

- The provision of remedial therapy is cases of articulation disorders.
- Administration of packaged programs.
- Provision of assistance in general language stimulation programs.
- Recording, charting or graphing of data relative to client performance.
- Transmission of information to clients which directly relates to tasks performed during therapy sessions.

Examples of Duties a Speech Assistant May not Engage in:

- Administration of diagnostic tests.
- Interpretation of test results.
- Design of treatment programs.
- Counseling or transmission of information, other than that stated above, to clients, the client's family, or other professionals.
- Decision-making regarding the initiation, duration, termination of treatment.
- Referral of a client to other professionals or agencies.
- Composing of clinical reports, expect for progress notes to be held in client's file.

TRAINING OF SPEECH ASSISTANT

Training procedures will vary according to the 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 Speech-Language Pathology, specifically information regarding patterns of normal speech and language development, characteristics of specific disorders/delays and related difficulties which may influence communication skills (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 goals, therapy procedures, materials, reinforcement strategies, methods of records keeping and appropriate follow-up (i.e. home programming, re-evaluation schedule, 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 assistant be afforded continuing education opportunities.

SUPERVISION

Before independently supervising a speech therapy technician, the speech-language pathologist should have a minimum of one year experience in the related work setting with previous supervisory experience an asset. Further training in supervisory skills should be made available to a speech-language pathologist when introducing support personnel to an employment setting.

The duties of a Speech Assistant or assistants must be contingent upon the availability of, and access to, a registered speech-language pathologist 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 requirement should be included within the speech-language pathologist's job description and sufficient time provided for the completion of these duties.

The maximum number of assistants 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 number of clients directly served by the professional in relation to the number of assistants being supervised.

The following are guidelines for the supervision of technicians which should include:

1. Direct observation of a minimum of one in every ten clinical contacts (per client). Direct observations should be documented and should include information regarding the quality of the assistant's performance.
2. Indirect observations on one in every five clinical contacts (per client). Indirect 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 assistant.

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

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

The speech-language pathologist will:

- Be a qualified professional in good standing with a professional association and/or regulatory body.
- Design, implement and modify individual treatment programs.
- Provide direct on-site supervision of the speech therapy 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.
- Review treatment programs and individual profess to determine continuation or termination of treatment.
- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the speech therapy technician and supervising speech-language pathologist 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 speech therapy technician are clearly outlined for the client.
- Obtain appropriate consent before allowing a speech therapy 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.