CSASK

Virtual Care Practice Guideline

Effective: May 19, 2021

Submitted by: CSASK ADHOC Committee
on Virtual Care Guidelines

These standards apply to virtual care provided to clients* in Saskatchewan by CSASK registrants. Any audiologist or speech-language pathologist who provides services to Saskatchewan residents must be licensed by CSASK.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists providing virtual care to clients outside Saskatchewan must comply with any licensing requirements and standards set by the other jurisdictions.

*NOTE: The word client is used in this document to represent all patients, clients and residents who may be receiving speech and hearing services.

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DEFINITIONS

VIRTUAL CARE: the provision of technology enabled audiology and SLP services to patients who are in a different location.

VIRTUAL CARE (formerly telepractice) is the provision of technology enabled audiology and speech language pathology (SLP) services to patients who are in a different location from the audiologist, SLP or supervised support personnel. Virtual care also includes training or educating family members, caregivers, partners, and significant others, via technology, for the benefit of the patient. Finally, it includes technology enabled instruction and consultation to support personnel and other professionals who are directly interacting with the patient in real time.[1]

Virtual care may be used in combination with traditional (in-person) provision of care and may include aspects of the below formats of virtual care:

ASYNCHRONOUS - communication methods which are not real time interactions. These may include email, audio, video, or media-streaming, or non-real time documents sharing (e.g., Google documents).[2]

SYNCHRONOUS - communication methods which are in real time. These may include, but are not limited to, text-based chat, voice-based chat, including phone conversations, audio- or videoconferencing, web-conferencing, virtual worlds, whiteboard, and real time document sharing.[2]

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CSASK audiologists and SLPs shall ensure that the standards of service delivered via virtual care are equivalent to the standards expected in traditional delivery methods and are delivered in accordance with the Virtual Care Guideline, the CSASK Code of Ethics, CSASK Bylaws, The Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Act other relevant guidelines.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
Ensure that the standards of service delivered via virtual care are equivalent to the standards expected in traditional delivery methods.

Audiologists and SLPs must always strive to meet and follow this guideline. There may be unusual circumstances or situations when it is in the client's best interest to deviate from the guideline. Document your clinical reasoning and rationale in the client record, including your discussion with the client regarding the standard when obtaining consent. If required, contact CSASK for further guidance.[1]

PRIVACY

PRIVACY: Take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal health information (PHI) is transmitted, managed and stored in a secure and

Audiologists and SLPs must take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal health information (PHI) is transmitted, managed, and stored in a secure and confidential manner by ensuring compliance with all relevant privacy and security requirements and legislation during the provision of virtual care services. This includes ensuring that technology utilized meets any applicable legal and ethical requirements for confidentiality and security of information (see RESOURCES). [1, 3]

REGISTRANT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1 Professional Competence

- Audiologists and SLPs must have the knowledge and skills to engage in virtual care safely and effectively.

2 Continuing Education

- Audiologists and SLPs must make efforts to remain current with all aspects of virtual practice, including evidence-based practice, given that technologies, platforms, functions, security measures and data collection change rapidly.

3 Limitations on Practice

- Audiologists and SLPs must use their professional judgement regarding the appropriateness of virtual care for each patient at all stages of clinical intervention.

4 Delegation

- Audiologists and SLPs must ensure that a person assisting a client's virtual care has the necessary qualifications, competencies and skills.
- Audiologists and SLPs must also follow the *CSASK Guidelines for Supportive Personnel* when audiology or S-LP assistants are providing virtual care.

5 Information for the Client

- Audiologists and SLPs must maintain appropriate documentation, including informed consent for use of virtual care and documentation of the virtual care encounter.

6 Informed Consent

- Audiologists and SLPs must:
  - include the risks and benefits of virtual care;
  - explain the scope and limitations of virtual care; and
  - provide alternate intervention methods and treatment options to virtual care, if available.

7 Resources

Audiologists and SLPs must maintain appropriate technical resources to provide a given virtual service safely and consistently.

REFERENCES

1. CASLPO. (September 3, 2020). STANDARDS FOR VIRTUAL CARE IN ONTARIO BY CASLPO AUDIOLOGISTS AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS. Retrieved from: https://caslpo.com/sites/default/uploads/files/PS_EN_Standards_Virtual_Care.pdf
2. CSHBC. (June 21, 2019. Revised June 29, 2020). Standards of Practice – Virtual Care. Retrieved from: http://cshbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CSHBC-SOP-PRAC-03-Virtual-Care.pdf
3. SCPT. (March 2019). Practice Guideline #24 Telerehabilitation. Retrieved from: https://scpt.in1touch.org/uploaded/web/A%20Practice%20Guideline%2024%20Telerehabilitation%20March%202019.pdf

Additional References

- ASHA. Telepractice. Retrieved from: https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/telepractice/#collapse_1

RESOURCES

- The Health Information Protection Act, Chapter H-0.021 of the Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1999, http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/english/Statutes/Statutes/H0-021.pdf; accessed 01 September 2015.

- The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Chapter L-27.1 of the Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1990-91, http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Statutes/Statutes/L27-1.pdf; accessed 01 September 2015.

- Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, 2000, http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/P-8.6.pdf; accessed 01 September 2015