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I Have Something to Say

I Have Something to Say Policy and Procedure Manual

2016

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1. Ethical Practice and Professional Responsibilities

Speech pathologists aspire to maintain the highest ethical standards by applying principles of ethical behaviour within their everyday practice and by proactively identifying potential ethical dilemmas and setting in place policies and procedures to circumvent or deal with these dilemmas if they do occur. Speech pathologists know of and adhere to all relevant laws within Australia and maintaining a minimum standard of current clinical skills, practice facilities and practice equipment / tools.

1.1 Knowledge and application of Speech Pathology's Code of Ethics (2010).

1.2 Knowledge of and compliance of all relevant laws

1.3 Quality assurance and continuing professional development

1.4 Minimum standards met for practice facilities, equipment and tools



1.1 Knowledge and application of Speech Pathology Australia's Code of Ethics (2010)

Policy

The speech pathologist reads, understands and applies SPA's Code of Ethics (2010) (the Code) to all of their professional interactions.

Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) strongly encourages employers of speech pathologists to ensure that their employees are members of SPA and that they then assist them to comply with this policy.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist (and their staff) reads the Code once per year.
- b) The speech pathologist (and their staff) attends a SPA continuing education event related to the Code of Ethics (2010) and/or completes SPA's Ethics Education Package once every two years.
- c) The speech pathologist (and their staff) discuss the Code with colleagues through case discussions, critique of articles and position papers and reflects on their own practice as often possible.
- d) The speech pathologist provides new clients with a copy of SPA's Code of Ethics (2010), or informs new clients as to where they can obtain a copy of the Code.
- e) The speech pathologist displays SPA's Code of Ethics (2010) on the website. SPA's Code of Ethics posters can be obtained on request from National Office.
- f) The speech pathologist (and their staff) is aware of the procedure for reporting a breach of the Code to SPA.



1.2 Knowledge of and compliance of all relevant laws

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with all relevant Australian, state, territory and local government laws, licences, registrations and leases.

Procedure

a) The speech pathologist has available within the practice a copy of (or is able to provide access to) all relevant laws.

b) The speech pathologist ensures that she/he (and their staff) complies with all of the relevant laws.



1.3 Quality assurance and continuing professional development

Policy

The speech pathologist provides a quality service that adheres to the principles outlined in SPA's Code of Ethics (2010), including maintaining currency of and improving professional knowledge and skills and only operating within her/his scope of knowledge and experience. The speech pathologist refers a client to another speech pathologist if he/she feels he/she lacks the required knowledge or expertise.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist maintains the currency of and enhances their professional knowledge and skills by participating in SPA's Professional Self Regulation (PSR) program.
- b) The speech pathologist acknowledges the limits of their professional knowledge and skills and develops a referral process for client's whose needs fall outside the range of her/his expertise.



1.4 Minimum standards met for practice facilities, equipment and tools

Policy

The speech pathologist provides practice facilities that are safe, private and comfortable and the equipment used within the clinic is appropriate for the service provided (this applies in particular to the currency and range of assessment tools).

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist ensures all of the equipment is appropriate for the service provided, including:
- All assessment tools required to complete assessments are available.
 - All assessment tools are current versions.
 - All assessment record forms used are copyrighted forms.
 - Equipment used in the practice is regularly checked and maintained.
 - Equipment used in the practice is cleaned frequently.



2. Communication between the speech pathologist and the client

Speech pathologists provide clear and concise communications with their clients (or potential clients). Speech pathologists are aware of the potential barriers to clients understanding or remembering information presented (e.g. communication disability, reduced literacy skills, English as a second language) and set in place policies to assist clients to understand or remember information. Speech pathologists provide timely information. The speech pathologist develops and adheres to benchmarks for the timely provision of information. This applies particularly to the provision of assessment / diagnostic reports.

2.1 Response to initial contact from potential new client

2.2 Informing potential client if a waiting list applies

2.3 Referral to another service if the practice is at capacity

2.4 Assessment and reporting options

2.5 Confirmation of initial appointment

2.6 Information gathered and shared during the initial session

2.7 Informing the client of the clinic policies

2.8 Discussing the assessment and provide a report.

2.9 Developing and discussing the therapy plan

2.10 Providing information about the homework requirements



2.1 Response to initial contact from potential new client

Policy

The speech pathologist responds to contact from a potential new client in a timely manner and provides them with, or directs them to, clearly written information including the service provided, fee schedule and waiting list procedure (if applicable).

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist responds to a potential new client's contact within 24 hours (or will advise of delay in responding if unable to respond within 24 hours)
- b) The speech pathologist provides a potential new client with an information sheet (or directs them to written information).
- c) The speech pathologist provides information (and discusses with the potential client) about waiting list procedures (if applicable).
- d) If unable to provide a service to the potential new client the speech pathologist provides them with information about alternative services.



2.2 Informing the potential client if a waiting list applies

Policy

If the speech pathologists utilises a waiting list they must inform the client as to how the waiting list is managed and how and when they are likely to be offered a place.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist will develop a waiting list policy.
- b) The speech pathologist will inform the client of the policy (preferably in writing) or direct them to where they can find information about the policy.



2.3 Referral to another service if the practice is at capacity

Policy

The speech pathologist provides the client with a range of options regarding an alternative service (both public and private) if they are unable to see the client in their own practice.

Procedure

a. The speech pathologist will provide the client with a list of alternative service providers if they are unable to see the client in their own practice.



2.4 Assessment and reporting options

Policy

The speech pathologist advises the new client of the assessment and reporting options available to them, including fees, payment options and time-line of process.

Procedure

a. The speech pathologist provides the new client with an information sheet (and discusses) detailing the assessment process and reporting options.



2.5 Confirmation of initial appointment

Policy

The speech pathologist provides written confirmation of the appointment booked and all relevant information (e.g., the clinician's name, fee payable, method of payment and cancellation policy) to the client.

Procedure

- a. The speech pathologist provides written confirmation of the appointment day/date/time, clinician's name, fee, payment method and cancellation policy to the client in the form of a Confirmation of Appointment letter.
- b. The speech pathologist will provide the Confirmation of Appointment letter to the client (if practicable) at least one week prior to the appointment.



2.6 Information gathered and shared during the initial session

Policy

During the initial sessions the speech pathologist gathers comprehensive information (including referral source, custody arrangements, private health cover), provides all relevant information to the client (including privacy policy, the public services and/or funding options available to the client, potential conflicts of interest) and gains informed consent to obtain or disclose information.

Procedure:

- a. The speech pathologist gathers a case history and other relevant information including the source of referral, custody arrangements, and private health cover.
- b. The speech pathologist provides written information to the client about the Privacy Policy, the public services available to the client and/or funding options available to the client.
- c. The speech pathologist discloses any potential conflicts of interest to the client (this is particularly relevant for speech pathologists who work in the public and private sectors).
- d. The speech pathologist obtains written informed consent from the client to obtain or disclose information (if necessary).



2.7 Informing the client of the clinic policies

Policy

The speech pathologist ensures that clients have access to the clinic policies.

Procedure

- a. The speech pathologist provides the client with written information (and discusses) the following policies with the client:
 - Booking of appointments
 - Cancellation of appointments
 - Privacy
 - Client feedback or complaints
 - Termination of service (if applicable)



2.8 Discussing the assessment and provide a report.

Policy

The speech pathologist discusses the results of the assessment/screen and provides a written report that documents the assessment tools, results, diagnosis, recommendations, goals etc.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist provides the client with a copy of the assessment report.

- b) The speech pathologist reviews the assessment process, discusses the results of the assessment, any relevant diagnosis, recommendations and goals.

- c) With permission from the client, the speech pathologist shares the report with relevant professionals e.g. teacher, OT, psychologist etc.



2.9 Developing and discussing the therapy plan

Policy

The speech pathologist provides the client with (and discuss) a comprehensive therapy plan, prior to the client commencing therapy. Information covered will include: frequency of therapy sessions, the length of the therapy sessions, the cost of the therapy sessions, the cancellation policy, the goals of therapy and the review process (if applicable).

Procedure

(a) The speech pathologist discusses (and provide the client with a written therapy plan) their recommendations regarding the frequency of therapy sessions, length of the sessions, the cost of the sessions, the cancellation policy, the goals of therapy and the review process (if applicable) with the client. This should occur prior to the client agreeing to attend therapy.

(b) The client indicates their informed consent to the therapy plan by signing the therapy plan.

(c) The speech pathologist provides the client with a copy of the therapy plan.



2.10 Providing information about the homework requirements

Policy

The speech pathologist discusses (and provides written information) about the homework requirement. Information will include: what is to be completed for homework, how often the homework is to be completed, and how efficacy of the homework is to be evaluated.

Procedure

a. The speech pathologist discusses what is to be completed for homework (and has demonstrated this to the client and/or provided the client with an opportunity to practice the activity during the session), and negotiates with the client the number of times the homework is to be completed and sets in place a method of evaluating the efficacy of the homework or avenue for discussing problems related to completing the homework) or questions the client may have.



3. Communication between the speech pathologist and other service providers

Speech pathologists provide clear and timely communication to all service providers working with a client.

3.1 Acknowledging source of the referral

3.2 Contacting other health/education professionals involved in the care of the client

3.3 Discontinuation of service

3.4 Handover to another speech pathologist

3.5 Third party funding programs reporting requirements (See 5 Reporting requirements)



3.1 Acknowledging source of referral

Policy

The speech pathologist acknowledges receipt of the referral by (where applicable) providing written confirmation of the client attending the service to the referral source.

Procedure

- a. The speech pathologist sends a letter to the referral source acknowledging receipt of the referral and outlining the speech pathologists ongoing involvement with the client.



3.2 Contacting other service providers involved in the care of the client

Policy

The speech pathologist contacts (where applicable to the coordination of care for the client) all of the other professionals involved with the client.

Procedure

a. The speech pathologist writes to (or rings) the other health/education professionals outlining their involvement with the child and establishing how often (if required) they will be communicating with that professional.



3.3 Discontinuation of service

Policy

The speech pathologist informs the referral source (if applicable) and all of the other professionals involved in the care of the client if the service is to be discontinued.

Procedure

a. The speech pathologist writes to the other health professionals informing them of the discontinuation of the service.

Evaluation None available



3.4 Handover to another speech pathologist

Policy

The speech pathologist provides the new speech pathologist with a Handover (Summary) Report detailing the service provided to the client.

Procedure

- a. The speech pathologist gains the client's permission to provide the new speech pathologist with a Handover Report (and informs the client of any charge related to providing the report).
- b. The speech pathologist provides the new speech pathologist with a Handover Report before the client commences seeing them (if practical).
- c. The Handover Report contains background information, details of other professionals involved in the client's care, a summary of assessment results, a summary of speech therapy history (e.g., frequency of therapy, goals of therapy, client's progress) and any other information of note. The speech pathologist informs the new speech pathologist of how and when they can be contacted if they require clarification of information contained in the report or any other information.



3.5 Referral to other speech pathologists and professionals

Policy

When indicated clinically, the speech pathologist is able to recommend a client see a different speech pathologist or an additional health professional e.g. occupational therapist, psychologist etc.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist provides the client with a list of suitable professionals. Ideally, this list should contain a minimum of 2-3 names.

- b) The speech pathologist can provide information about the areas in which that professional has a special interest.

- c) It is appropriate for a speech pathologist to provide the name of only one health professional to a client in certain circumstances. This might occur when there are only a few practitioners working in a clinical area (e.g. speech pathologist working in the area of infant feeding or in the provision of a specific AAC system) or if there are only a few providers working in a specific geographical area.

- d) The speech pathologist should document these recommendations in the client's file.



3.6 Third party funding programs reporting requirements See 5.5 Reporting to third party funding sources.



4. Record Keeping

Speech pathologists are required by law to keep accurate records of all manner of information. This section of the Policy and Procedure Manual aims to provide information about what information is to be retained, the essential components of the information to be retained, how it should be recorded, and how long it should be kept for.

4.0 Client database

4.1 Client Health Record (File)

4.2 Financial records



4.0 Client database

Policy

The speech pathologist compiles a client database which contains client contact details (including a record of any Court orders pertaining to paediatric clients), billing information (including information about third party funding sources) and discharge information (if applicable).

Procedure

a) The speech pathologist gathers client information including:

- Client (or parent) contact details (including Next of Kin if the client attends the session on their own or details for someone to be contacted in an emergency if the if the client attends the clinic with a parent)
- Any Court orders pertaining to the client (if applicable)
- Name of private health insurer (if eligible for private health fund rebate)

b) The speech pathologist keeps a record of billing information including:

- Invoices and receipts (preferably using an electronic billing system)
- Record of rebate claimed for the service (if applicable)

c) The speech pathologist records the following information if the client is discharged from the practice or if the client health record is destroyed:

- Date of discharge
- Reason for discharge
- Where referred to if client is attending another service
- Date client record is destroyed



4.1 Client Health Record

Policy

The speech pathologist compiles a confidential Health Record (client file) for each client and collects, stores, releases and destroys the Health Record according to the relevant laws (e.g., Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and relevant State Acts). Information in the file includes a copy of client information recorded in the Client Database, referral information, a record of other service providers involved with the client, a log of all client contacts, session plans and notes, a record of assessments conducted (including record forms and working notes), correspondence received and sent and discharge information (if applicable).

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist has available within the practice a copy of (or be able to provide access to) all relevant laws.
- b) The speech pathologist complies with all of the relevant laws (but particularly the Australian Privacy Principles) pertaining to health record collection, use and disclosure, access, security, retention and destruction.
- c) The speech pathologist keeps a copy of the client information recorded in the Client Database in the client file.
- d) The speech pathologist keeps a record of the referral source and their contact details in the client file.
- e) The speech pathologist keeps a record of other service providers who are involved with the client and their contact details and any correspondence received from or sent to the other service providers.
- f) The speech pathologist keeps a log of all client contacts including:
 - sessions attended
 - sessions cancelled and why (record if cancellation fee charged and how much)
 - phone calls
 - emails or letters
 - other
- g) The speech pathologist records each session the client attends. Information to include in the session notes:
 - client name



- date of session
- names of people in attendance (e.g., client and parent)
- clinician's name
- where session held
- length of session (if variation in length of session, why there was a variation)
- feedback or information from parent (e.g., homework completed, visits to other service provider)
- other information discussed with parent
- goals of therapy, activities completed and outcome
- record of homework to be completed (record if discussed or not discussed with parent)
- date of next session
- plan for next session



4.2 Financial Records

Policy

The speech pathologist keeps financial records that comply with all relevant legislation (including retaining the records for the required amount of time) and seeks specialist advice (from the Australian Taxation Office or an accountant) if unsure as to what the relevant legislation is.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist has available within the practice a copy of (or be able to provide access to) all relevant laws.

- b) The speech pathologist ensures that she/he (and their staff) complies with all of the relevant laws.



5. Reporting

Providing written information to a client and/or other service providers etc. following an assessment is an essential part of the assessment process. In some instances it is a legal requirement (e.g., following provision of Medicare rebatable services or when applying for funding) and information about what is to be included in the report is provided to the speech pathologist. It is important to have consistency across the profession regarding what to include in the report and how to present the information to aid understanding for other service providers and clients. In light of there being no recognised standard procedure for speech pathology report writing, SPA encourages members to follow the general guidelines detailed in SPA's Guide to report writing.

5.1 General guidelines regarding reporting

5.2 Reporting to support funding applications

5.3 Reporting to third party funding sources



5.1 General guidelines regarding reporting

Policy

The speech pathologist provides a report (appropriate to the reporting needs) in a timely manner which adheres to all of the general guidelines regarding reporting.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist determines the reporting needs through consultation with the client and/or other service provider.
- b) The speech pathologist advises the client/other service provider of the type of report to be provided, the cost of the report and when the report will be provided to the client/other service provider.
- c) The speech pathologist completes the report and provides it to the client/other service provider within the negotiated time frame.

Please note: SPA recommends within two weeks for screening or summary/handover reports and within one month for more complex reports (e.g., diagnostic reports or reports to be used for funding applications).

- d) The speech pathologist provides a feedback session with the client/other service provider to discuss complex reports.
- e) The speech pathologist writes the report in a concise and clear manner and provides information to the client/other service provider of any terminology or information that may be difficult for the reader to understand.



5.2 Reporting to support funding applications

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with all of the reporting requirements determined by the funding body.

Procedure

a) The speech pathologist determines the reporting requirements prior to agreeing to provide the service and submit the funding application.

Please note: the speech pathologist must ensure they have all of the necessary assessment tools before agreeing to accept a client who may be eligible for funding.



5.3 Reporting to third party funding sources

Medicare – Chronic Disease Management program reporting requirements

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with Medicare's Chronic Disease Management (CDM) program reporting requirements.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist knows and understands Medicare's reporting requirements for the CDM program outlined in the Medical Benefits Schedule.
- b) The speech pathologist sends a report to the referring GP after the first and final session.

Medicare – Follow-up Allied Health Services for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with Medicare's Follow-up Allied Health Services for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent program's reporting requirements.

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist knows and understands Medicare's reporting requirements for the Follow-up Allied Health Services for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent outlined in the Medical Benefits Schedule.
- b) The speech pathologist sends report to the referring GP after the first and last service.

Medicare – Helping Children with Autism and Better Start for Children with Disability programs (Medicare items) reporting requirements

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with Medicare's Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) and Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) reporting requirements.

Procedure



a) The speech pathologist knows and understands Medicare's reporting requirements for the HCWA and Better Start programs as outlined in the Medical Benefits Schedule.

b) For Item number 82005 the speech pathologist will send a report to the referring Paediatrician/Psychiatrist at the completion of the allocated number of assessment sessions.

For Item number 82020 the speech pathologist will send a report to the referring Paediatrician/Psychiatrist at the completion of the first and last service* (i.e., after 10 sessions).

*10 sessions is considered by Medicare in this instance to be a service.

Other third party funding sources

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with all of the reporting requirements as determined by other third party funding sources such as DVA, WorkCover, TAC etc.

Procedure

a) The speech pathologist determines the reporting requirements prior to agreeing to provide the service.



6. Occupational Health and Safety

As business owners' private practitioners have responsibilities regarding health and safety in the workplace for their customers, staff and the general public. Knowing and understanding the occupational health and safety (OH&S) laws and new work health and safety (WHS) laws is essential. Creating a safe work environment is one of the best ways to retain staff and maximise productivity and it will also provide your business with a strong foundation to achieve long-term success.

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with all of the OH&S and WHS laws.

Procedure

(a) The speech pathologist knows and understands the occupational health and safety (OH&S) and new health and safety (WHS) legislation.

(b) The speech pathologist provides:

- safe machinery and materials
- safe systems of work
- information, instruction, training and supervision
- a suitable working environment and facilities.

(c) The speech pathologist seeks independent advice if they are unsure of their OH&S and WHS responsibilities.



7. Human Resources Management

Employees create value and can generate a return on investment for your business. For this to happen however, both the needs of the business and the individual need to be met. This requires the business owner to understand their legal obligations and duties. These obligations and duties are designed to protect employees and maximise productivity in the workplace and are enforceable under Common Law.

Policy

The speech pathologist complies with all of their legal obligations and duties as outlined in; federal, state and territory laws, industrial awards and agreements, tribunal decisions and contracts of employment (whether written or verbal).

Procedure

- a) The speech pathologist knows and understands all of their legal obligations and duties when employing staff or engaging contractors.

- b) The speech pathologist seeks independent advice if unsure of their legal obligations and duties.

