

Scope of Practice in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology



भारतीय पुनर्वास परिषद

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Rehabilitation Council of India

B-22, Qutab Institutional Area,
New Delhi - 110 016

Email: rehabstd@nde.vsnl.net.in, rehcouncil_delhi@bol.net.in
www.rehabcouncil.nic.in

Scope of Practice in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology

This statement on scope of practice in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology is an official policy of the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). RCI is a statutory body created under the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992. RCI is entrusted with the twin responsibility of regulating and monitoring the training of personnel in the disability sector, and maintaining a Central Rehabilitation Register. Any professional in the disability sector wishing to practice in the area of any disability should not only possess a graduate / diploma degree recognized by the RCI, but should also be registered with the RCI and included in the Central Rehabilitation Register. This document was approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India in 2015.

Statement of Purpose

This document provides a description of the scope of practice of the profession of audiology and speech-language pathology in India and it dwells upon the services that can be provided only by qualified audiologists and speech-language pathologists. Certification will be by the Rehabilitation Council of India. The scope of practice in audiology and speech-language pathology in India, enunciated here, is consistent with the principles of the International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) and guidelines of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nation, 2006).

The document is intended to

- a) define areas of practice for Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists functioning independently or as members of a multidisciplinary team,
- b) serve as a resource for health care professionals, regulatory bodies, Government agencies, educators, consumers, the general public and any other stake holders,
- c) serve as a reference on issues relating to service delivery, man power development, employment, insurance, legislation, consumer education, regulatory action, professional licensure, planning, and inter-professional relations,
- d) provide guidance for the development of curricula for man-power training programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and
- e) to support and guide Speech-Language Pathologists in their educational preparation, professional development and research activities

The graduate program in India encompasses both Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology at present while combined as well as bifurcated programs is available at the master's level. Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists provide their services to all individuals across the age span from birth through adulthood; speaking diverse languages; having different religious beliefs; and individuals from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The activities described in this document are not intended to constitute an exhaustive list of the professional responsibilities shouldered by Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists. Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology is a dynamic and continuously developing profession. Therefore, periodic revisions of this document shall be made as and when developments necessitate.

An Audiologists and a Speech-Language Pathologists may not practice in all the areas mentioned in this document. It is recognized that individual professionals may limit or expand their practice depending on their interest, expertise, training, and the circumstances. It is also quite possible that some members of the profession may have the expertise to provide services that do not appear in this document. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists are ethically bound to provide services that are consistent with the scope of their individual training, competence and experience. Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists shall continually update and improve their knowledge and skills by attending the Continuing Rehabilitation Education programs, conventions, seminars, workshops and other professional development programs.

Definition

Though an Audiologist and a Speech-Language Pathologist is part of an integrated health care system in India, they are independent in their work. In other words, the work of an audiologist and speech-language pathologist shall not be prescribed or supervised by any other professional.

Audiologist is a qualified professional who provides a comprehensive array of professional services related to the identification, diagnosis and management of persons with auditory (peripheral and central), balance and related disorders, and the prevention of these impairments. They facilitate prevention through the fitting of hearing protective devices, education programs for industry and the public, hearing screening/conservation programs, and research. Audiologists may also engage in research pertinent to all of these domains.

Speech-Language Pathologist is a qualified professional who provides a

comprehensive array of professional services related to the identification, diagnosis and management of persons with communication and swallowing disorders. Speech-Language Pathologists are involved in activities to promote effective communication and swallowing in individuals they serve and prevent disorders of these processes. The speech-language pathologist is a professional who engages in clinical services, prevention, advocacy, education, administration, and research in the broad areas of communication and swallowing.

The overall goal of the provision of audiology and speech-language pathology services is to optimize and enhance the ability of an individual to hear, speak and communicate. Additionally, Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists may assist normal individuals who interact with persons with communication impairment.

The designations of speech and hearing professionals in India should be specified as one of the following:

- a) Audiologist
- b) Speech-Language Pathologist
- c) Audiologist and Speech-Language Pathologist
- d) Speech-Language Pathologist and Audiologist
- e) Speech Therapist and Audiologist

It is further stipulated that

- a) the words speech therapist and speech-language pathologist mean the same and can be used inter-changeably, and
- b) though anybody with a Diploma in Speech-language and Hearing or Communication Disorders can dispense services for the needy, he/she shall do so only under the supervision of a speech and hearing professional with at least a graduate degree. Therefore, the contents of this document are applicable to only those diploma holders working under the supervision of a graduate speech and hearing professional and not to others.

Educational Requirements/ Qualifications

Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists complete a graduate, or a master's or a doctoral degree in the field of speech, language and hearing from a recognized University from India or abroad. The postgraduate and doctoral programs include a provision for integrated program in audiology and speech-language pathology as well as

specialization in audiology or speech-language pathology.

In addition to affiliation to recognized universities, the institutions running training programs in speech-language pathology and audiology in India are recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India. Only those who have a recognized degree / diploma in speech-language pathology and audiology (or in the broad field of speech-language pathology and audiology) and registered with the Rehabilitation Council of India can practice speech-language pathology and audiology in this country (www.rehabcouncil.nic.in). Rehabilitation Council of India requires demonstration of continued professional development for the maintenance of membership in its Central Rehabilitation Register.

Professional Roles and Responsibilities

Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists provide a broad range of services to individuals with hearing, speech-language and communication problems as detailed below:

Clinical Services: Audiology

1 Prevention and identification

- a) Promotion of hearing health - Prevention of hearing disorders in children and adults by conducting appropriate hearing conservation and noise management programs in schools, industries and community. This also includes selection, counseling and monitoring of the use of hearing protection devices such as ear muffs, ear plugs, etc.
- b) Supervision, implementation, and follow-up of newborn and school hearing screening programs

2 Assessment

- a) Clinical and/or instrumental screening, identification, assessment, and diagnosis of
 - hearing disorders involving peripheral or central pathways of hearing in persons of all ages,
 - hearing-related disorders like tinnitus, hyperacusis, etc.,
 - hearing system-related balance disorders, and
 - auditory-related processing disorders.

- b) The conduct and interpretation of behavioral, electroacoustic, and/or electrophysiological methods to assess hearing, auditory function, balance, and related systems
- c) Assessment of candidacy of persons with hearing loss for cochlear implants and provision of fitting, mapping, and audiologic / educative rehabilitation to optimize device use.
- d) Electro diagnostic tests for purposes of neurophysiologic intraoperative monitoring and cranial nerve assessment.

3 Management and Rehabilitation

- a) Management of hearing and hearing system-related balance disorders through instrumental and/or behavioral methods including expert advice for their medical/surgical management.
- b) Assessment, selection, fitment and dispensing of all kinds of hearing assistive devices including hearing aids and (re)habilitation regimes for individuals with hearing impairment, hearing system-related balance disorders, tinnitus and other auditory-related related disorders. Rehabilitation regimes include adult and child aural (re)habilitation, speech reading, tinnitus re-training, vestibular (re)habilitation, manual communication etc.
- c) Development and implementation of an audiologic rehabilitative plan including
 - hearing aid fitment, educating the consumer and caregivers in the use of and adjustment to hearing-related sensory aids, counseling relating to psycho social aspects of auditory dysfunction, and environmental modifications to facilitate development of receptive and expressive communication
 - Participation in the development of an Individual Education Program for school-age children and provision of in-service programs for school personnel in planning educational programs for children with auditory dysfunction
 - Selection, installation, and evaluation of large-area amplification systems.
- d) Consultation with, and referrals to, professionals in related and/or allied fields, services, agencies, and / or consumer organizations.

- e) Medico legal consultation and advice including applications in forensic science

Clinical Services: Speech-Language Pathology

1 Prevention and identification

- a) Screening for speech, orofacial and myofunctional disorders, language, cognitive communication disorders, and preferred communication modalities that may have a bearing on education, health, development or communication

2 Assessment

- a) Clinical and/or instrumental screening, identification, assessment, diagnosis and management of
- speech sound production delays and disorders
 - language delays and disorders
 - fluency disorders
 - phonation and resonance disorders
 - neurogenic communication disorders
 - swallowing and feeding disorders
 - cognitive-communicative disorders including disorders of social communication skills, attention, memory, reasoning, sequencing, problem solving, and executive functions
 - pre-literacy and literacy skills including phonological awareness, decoding, reading, comprehension, and writing
 - communication and swallowing disorders in the context of other diagnoses or impairments including but not limited to hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, dementia, developmental, intellectual or genetic disorders, and neurological impairments
 - speech disorders due to structural abnormalities like laryngectomy, glossectomy, cleft palate etc.

3 Management and Rehabilitation

- a) Management of all kinds of speech-language, communication and swallowing disorders through instrumental and/or behavioral methods including expert advice for their medical/surgical management
- b) Improvement of speech-language proficiency, communication effectiveness, and

care and improvement of professional voice.

- c) Development, assessment and selection of augmentative and alternative communication systems including unaided and aided strategies.
- d) Selecting, fitting, and establishing effective use of prosthetic/adaptive devices for communication and swallowing
- e) Consultation and training for development of effective communication skills in social and other settings
- f) Counseling affected individuals, their family members, coworkers, educators, and other persons in the community regarding enhancing communication environment, acceptance, adaptation, and decision making about communication and swallowing

Services /functions common to audiologists and speech-language pathologists

The following are some of the common services provided by audiologists and speech-language pathologists relating to their respective domains of specialization.

1 Advocacy

- a) Counseling and education services to clients, families, caregivers, other professionals, and the public regarding all aspects of speech, language, communication, swallowing, hearing, balance and auditory function.
- b) Advocacy for the rights / funding of services for persons with hearing loss, auditory dysfunction, balance dysfunction, auditory-related disorders, communication and swallowing disorders, and populations at risk.
- c) Consultation to educators as members of interdisciplinary teams about Individual Education Program, communication management, educational implications of communication disorders, hearing loss and auditory dysfunctions, educational programming, classroom acoustics, and large-area amplification systems for children with hearing loss and other auditory dysfunction;
- d) Consultation on assessment and management of educational, workplace and other public acoustical environments.

- e) Consultation with government, industry and community agencies regarding improvements relating to legislations on disability, rights of the disabled, noise and environment etc. and implementation of environmental and occupational hearing conservation programs.
- f) Consultation with worker's compensation boards and relevant governmental bodies regarding criteria and determination of pension/benefits for individuals with hearing loss and related disorders.
- h) Consultation to industry on the development of products and instrumentation relating to identification and assessment of speech, language, communication, swallowing, hearing, balance and auditory functions.
- i) Consultation to individuals, public and private agencies, and governmental bodies, or as an expert witness regarding legal interpretations of findings and legislations relating to all dimensions of hearing and speech-language.

2 Research and man power development

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists are involved in conducting basic and applied research related to normal processes and disorders of hearing, balance, communication, swallowing, and other related aspects. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists are involved in the design and conduct of basic and applied research to increase the knowledge base, to develop new methods and programs, and to determine the efficacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of assessment and treatment paradigms; disseminate research findings to other professionals and to the public in the relevant fields.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists serve as educators in University and/or college education and training programs related to hearing science and disorders as well as communication sciences and disorders and swallowing. Some of the activities include

- imparting education at different levels - certificate, diploma, degree, master's and doctoral - in the broad areas of audiology, and speech-language pathology,
- framing syllabi, curricula, clinical modules and policies related to training of professionals in speech-language pathology, audiology and related inter/trans-disciplinary fields,
- developing policies, operational procedures, professional standards and quality

improvement programs in the fields of audiology and speech-language pathology, and

- public education, and in-service training to families, caregivers, and other professionals.

3 Administration

- Development, administration and management of clinical programs.
- Administering and managing academic institutions running certificate, diploma, and degree programs at graduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels in the field of audiology and/or speech-language pathology.
- Administration in Government (state and central) and non-governmental agencies and institutions related to disability in general and audiology and/or speech-language pathology in particular as per the directions of the agencies and institutions.

Others

- a) Consultation with, and referrals to, professionals in related and/or allied fields, services, agencies, and / or consumer organizations.
- b) Medico legal consultation and advice including applications in forensic science.
- c) Quantification and certification of disability relating to all kinds of hearing, speech-language, communication and related disorders.
- d) Screening, assessment, management and rehabilitation can be through direct (face to face) or tele-mode.

Practice Settings

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists work in a variety of settings, including but not limited to:

- health care settings (including hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, medical rehabilitation centers, mental health facilities),
- regular and special schools,
- early intervention programs/ multidisciplinary rehabilitation centers,
- industrial settings,
- hearing aid and cochlear implant manufacturers,

- manufacturers of devices/prosthesis for individuals with communication and swallowing disorders,
- Universities/colleges and their clinics,
- professional associations,
- state and central government agencies and institutions,
- research centers, and
- private practice settings

Suggested Readings

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2007). *Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology* [Scope of Practice]. www.asha.org

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