



ACSLP

Association of Chief Speech-Language
Pathologists of Ontario District School Boards



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COVID-19 Pandemic Info Sheet

Who We Are

The Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario District School Boards (ACSLP) promotes school-based speech-language pathology services in the Province of Ontario and the District School Boards. ACSLP offers support and resources for the members who are employed by school boards and provides professional development to members.

Role of School-Based SLPs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

School speech-language pathologists play a critical role in supporting students with communication needs. As integral members of school-based teams, SLPs can take a leadership role in working creatively with district school boards during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure students and families are able to participate in remote learning opportunities. As regulated health professionals, school SLPs are encouraged to work in collaboration with educators and parents to best support the continuity of learning for students with communication needs.

This info sheet was developed to assist SLPs working in schools to facilitate a consistent and systematic response across Ontario to support students with speech and language concerns during these exceptional circumstances. While these parameters should be considered, SLPs must follow their school board's protocol and direction.

Working as a Regulated Health Professional in Education

Working as a Regulated Health Professional within a non-clinical organization is not always straight-forward. As we engage in alternative service delivery models, you may choose to share crucial aspects of the [Personal Health Information Protection Act](#) (PHIPA) and [Regulated Health Professions Act](#), as your school administrators and senior management may not be aware of what we must abide by as RHP (e.g., virtual platforms, privacy/confidentiality/ consent issues).

Consent and Privacy Issues

The consent form must be specific to the service you provide as it relates to the collection, use, and disclosure of personal health information. If your service delivery is going to be different (e.g., moving to telepractice), make sure to obtain informed consent specific to the change. See CASLPO's [Use of Telepractice Approaches](#) and SAC's [Use of Telepractice](#).

Considerations for Telepractice

Just as with face-to-face interactions, SLPs must adhere to professional standards of practice when using virtual platforms to deliver service. Consider platforms with features that:

- Comply with PHIPA;
- Employ authentication and encryption technology; and
- Have been endorsed by your school district.

Before delivering services virtually, SLPs should also consider:

- Student needs (*Is this service delivery option appropriate for my student?*); and
- Developing the required competencies to provide virtual services (*Do I need training/in servicing in the use of teletherapy equipment?*).

Shared Solutions

Information for District School Boards

To facilitate effective speech and language support to students, ACSLP recommends that boards:

- Leverage the capacity of SLPs to provide consultation and other supports remotely to teachers/families;
- Consider risk mitigation for students and staff engaged in teletherapy services; and
- Provide staff access to relevant professional development to support competencies in delivering services virtually.

Working from Home Privacy Considerations

Computer and mobile devices



- Password protect your device
- Lock your device when not in use
- Encrypt and password-protect portable storage devices (e.g., USBs). See CASLPO's [Practicing Securely in an Insecure World](#) for instructions.
- Keep your software up-to-date

Emails



- Use work email accounts rather than personal ones involving personal data
- Before sending an email, check the correct recipient, particularly if it involves personal data
- Obtain and document parental consent prior to sending resources/encrypted reports to parents (and others)
- If the email contains an attachment with personal health information (e.g., report), use a non-alternable format (e.g., PDF)

Paper copies and files



- Only remove personal information from the office if it is necessary to carry out your job duties
- Securely store any paper files when not in use (e.g., lock files; do not leave files in a car)

Equity for Students

Much of recent communication and resources are offered through electronic means. We recognize that there are families who may not have access to information in this format. Continue to think of alternate ways of reaching hard-to-serve families (e.g., phone calls, access to your board's official translators) to strive for equitable support to all students.