

Speech Pathology Australia

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# Code of Ethics

2020



# Introduction

Speech pathologists provide quality, efficient and effective services. It is fundamental to the professional responsibilities of speech pathologists that we observe the highest standards of ethical practice.

The Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics guides and informs our everyday professional practice and should be used by Speech Pathology Australia Members in a proactive manner.

Speech pathologists support individuals to maximise their communication and swallowing functions to optimise their quality of life. We achieve this through effective, culturally responsive assessment and diagnosis, intervention, collaboration, advocacy, community education, and research processes. When undertaking this work, we do so with an awareness of the broader context of human rights of the individual.

We consider the diverse context of individuals and/or communities, as identified in the World Health Organization's 'International Classification of Function, Disability and Health (ICF)' (2001).

The Code of Ethics must be considered along with relevant legislation, Speech Pathology Australia policies and professional standards. The Code of Ethics aligns with Speech Pathology Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan that recognises, values, and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, knowledges, ways of healing, languages and connections to and custodianship of lands, waterways, and seas.

## Using this Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics binds each member of Speech Pathology Australia. As a result, it contributes to responsible speech pathology practice and an ethical speech pathology community. Members of Speech Pathology Australia make a commitment to read, understand and comply with this Code of Ethics within all professional interactions. This commitment is renewed annually through the membership process of Speech Pathology Australia .



To ensure our knowledge is current and we continue to meet our professional responsibility to know and understand the Code of Ethics, we will:

- read and comply with the Code of Ethics;
- understand and comply with Speech Pathology Australia policies, and utilise resources available;
- discuss the Code of Ethics with colleagues through case discussions, critique of articles and position papers, and reflection on our own practice;
- participate in continuing professional development opportunities related to the Code of Ethics and to ethical practice; and
- access, complete and reflect upon Speech Pathology Australia's Ethics Education Resources.

### **Identification of a breach of the Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics is the basis for identification of a possible breach of ethics or professional conduct. It forms the basis for the decisions of Speech Pathology Australia's Ethics Board.

If a speech pathologist identifies a possible breach, these actions should be undertaken;

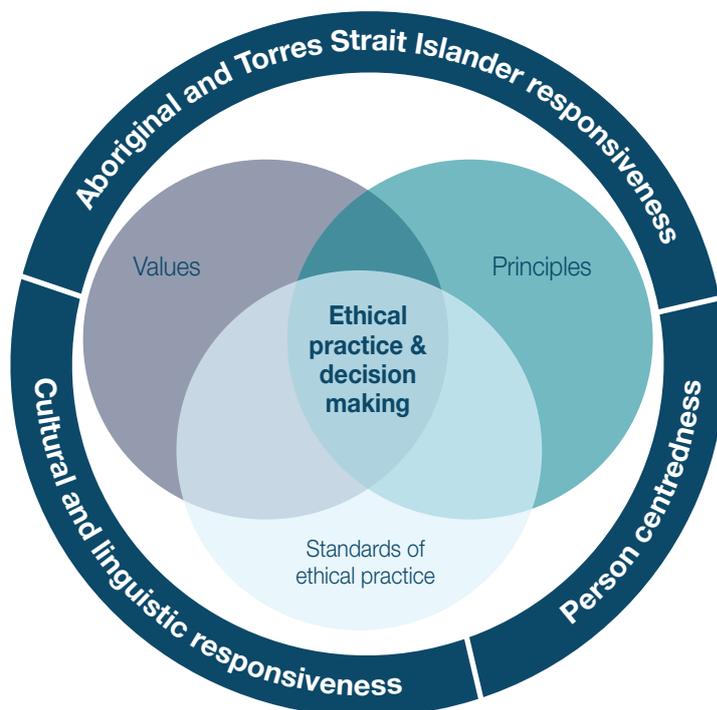
- consult the Code of Ethics, and any supporting documentation, policies and position statements, to determine if our concerns are reflected in the values, principles and standards for ethical practice;
- discuss our concerns with our colleague in a respectful, professional, objective and empathic manner; then
- contact Speech Pathology Australia for advice.

If a member of the public identifies a possible breach, they should contact Speech Pathology Australia for advice.



# Model of speech pathology ethical practice

Our values and principles guide how we make decisions and conduct ourselves as speech pathologists.



## Ethical values

Ethical values underpin our interactions. These values drive and inform how we behave.

### Respect and dignity

We promote a professional culture which embodies kindness through taking time to value, listen, and show compassion to others. In our professional work, we provide person- and relationship-centred care through respecting the worth of all people. We recognise and respect diversity, including the range of characteristics that make each person and community unique.

### Responsiveness

We collaborate, engage, advocate and partner with individuals, families, colleagues, other professionals, and the community to respond to their needs. We promote accessible communities.

### Quality and safety

We provide quality and competent professional services which follow evidence-based practice principles. We work within quality improvement and safety frameworks. We are responsible for managing our personal health and wellbeing to effectively fulfil our professional responsibilities.

### Professionalism and integrity

We uphold the reputation of our profession in all our activities and communications. We act in an objective manner, and are transparent, accountable and keep our commitments.

## Ethical principles

We apply these principles to guide us when making decisions in our everyday practice.

We recognise that these principles are of equal value and are inter-related.

### Autonomy

We respect the rights of others to self-determination, and to make free and informed decisions. We support client autonomy in the way that we gain and share information.

### Beneficence

We seek to benefit others through our activities.

### Non-maleficence

We act to prevent harm, and do not knowingly cause harm.

### Truth and veracity

We act honestly and demonstrate respect.

### Justice and fairness

Our professional decision-making is fair and equitable. We consider the context and the needs of the person and the wider community.

# Ethical practice standards

We have an ethical obligation to support people to exercise their human rights and we act according to relevant legislation. We uphold and advance the values, principles, ethics, knowledge, and skills of our profession. We understand and reflect the Code of Ethics in our everyday practice and actions as professionals and we comply with Speech Pathology Australia policies in a timely fashion.



# Professional practice

## 1.1 Professional competence

We hold appropriate qualifications and always practice to the highest standards of professional competence, in line with the Speech Pathology Australia professional standards and agreed scope of practice for the profession.

We develop and maintain the skills, knowledge, and partnerships needed to work in culturally responsive ways.

We recognise the uniqueness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures and languages.

We recognise the characteristics and context, inclusive of cultural and linguistic diversity, which makes each person and community unique.

We maintain our capacity and competence to practice. In particular we:

- engage in lifelong learning to maintain and continually update and extend our professional knowledge and skills. We do this by participating in professional development and seeking the support of a supervisor;
- undertake reflective practice to ensure the quality of the services we provide;
- recognise our competence (scope of our education, training, and experience) and do not practice beyond these limits. We seek education and professional supervision when changing our scope of practice; and
- recognise, develop and maintain a contemporary scope of practice for the profession.

## 1.2 Professional conduct

We provide safe, quality professional services. We:

- exercise due care, skill and attention to detail;
- are accountable for the provision of services that provide benefit to our clients and communities;
- have relevant and suitable service delivery policies and procedures and comply with them;
- communicate our policies and procedures in a responsive and timely manner;
- provide clear explanations and fulfil our

undertakings to our clients and other stakeholders;

- provide services only where there is a clinical need and don't directly or indirectly encourage the indiscriminate or unnecessary use of our services;
- ensure that our clients receive appropriate, timely referrals to enable them to receive comprehensive services;
- keep current, accurate and complete clinical and administrative documentation;
- comply with Speech Pathology Australia's current practice guidelines;
- represent our professional qualifications, experience, and standards accurately and fairly;
- exercise independent professional judgment when we provide professional services; and
- do not represent our personal views as being those of Speech Pathology Australia, the profession or our employers.

We respect our colleagues, other health professionals and others we work with and interact and communicate with them courteously and professionally.

If a conflict arises between our employers' policies, codes of conduct and our professional values, codes and standards, we work to negotiate change or a resolution through appropriate channels. If this does not resolve the conflict, we may seek the support of Speech Pathology Australia in an ethical and confidential manner.

We seek express permission for use of materials and any original work created or owned by others. We acknowledge the contribution of others and any other sources of original material.

We uphold the reputation of our profession and avoid behaviour that would bring the profession into disrepute. We:

- do not deliver services which research has shown to be ineffective or harmful;
- fulfil commitments made implicitly or explicitly;
- do not disparage the skills, knowledge, services or activities of our colleagues, the speech

pathology profession or Speech Pathology Australia in any form of communication without substantial evidence or reasonable justification; and

- do not engage in activities which bear on, or might negatively affect our professional role.

### 1.3 Professional responsibilities

We listen to, respect, learn from, and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We promote achievable and equitable health, wellbeing, communication, and educational outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

We co-design services with clients and communities.

We provide responsive and respectful services acknowledging cultural and linguistic diversity.

We use resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the individual or community. Where resources do not exist, we work with the community to develop them.

We treat others with honesty, fairness, respect, and good faith.

When needed, we identify and act on reasonable concerns we may have about colleagues' professional competence or conduct.

We accept responsibility for those we manage, supervise or employ. We demonstrate and discuss ethical practice with those we supervise to facilitate their ethical reasoning skills. We take reasonable steps to ensure that we, and those we are responsible for:

- are supervised by an appropriate supervisor;
- understand and apply our Code of Ethics;
- practice competently;
- are provided with opportunities for developing their professional identity, integrity and ethical practice;
- are supported to reflect on their practice and professional conduct; and
- are assisted to access relevant professional development and support when required.

If we manage, supervise, or employ others we:

- treat them fairly and without discrimination, bullying, or harassment;
- inform them fully about the terms and conditions of our relationship with them;
- inform them about, and involve them in, decision making processes;
- respect and comply with their industrial and professional entitlements (including in relation to remuneration), with reference to applicable laws, including employment laws and work health and safety laws;
- give them regular, fair and constructive feedback, and access to professional development to improve upon this feedback;
- make them aware of their employment rights;
- follow a fair process if a dispute arises;
- ensure they have equitable access to resources; and
- expressly recognise contributions to clinical practice, teaching, research or administration.

When we contribute to the development, knowledge, and expertise of our profession we:

- share clinical practice knowledge and research with colleagues;
- work to develop our ethical practice and support others to do the same;
- participate in the clinical education and supervision of university and work experience students; and
- create and maintain research opportunities and supporting research.



# Quality service

## 2.1 Consent, privacy, and confidentiality

We ensure informed consent has been obtained from clients for the services we offer, including for the information we collect and share and the cost of the services.

We treat as confidential all information we receive and handle in the course of our professional services.

We comply with relevant laws.

We maintain secure storage of digital and other files and best practices regarding privacy and security of personal information.

We do not disclose information about our clients, or the confidences they share with us, unless:

- our clients consent to this; or
- the law permits or requires us to disclose it.

## 2.2 Accurate and timely information

We make sure that information we provide is clear, accurate and sufficient, and that it is provided in a timely manner. We communicate in a respectful and professional way. We provide information that is accessible and understood by clients, their families and significant others. This includes information relating to:

- assessment, reports, and evidence-based practice and the implications of these;
- our professional opinion about client management to others;
- the nature and extent of the services available to clients and the likely outcomes of these services or the consequences of not receiving the services;
- the commitment required by the client;
- client rights to their personal information; and
- fees for services and other associated costs.

We maintain the currency and accuracy of information. We:

- represent our training and competence accurately; and
- ensure our promotional, marketing and advertising materials are accurate, objective, based on clinical evidence.

We educate the community about communication and swallowing and the assistance the speech pathology profession can provide.

We uphold the reputation of our profession.

## 2.3 Conflict of interest

We do not allow any personal, professional or financial interest to influence or affect our care of a client. We do not exploit professional relationships for emotional, personal, sexual, or financial gain. We do not sell, buy, endorse or promote the sale of services or products in ways that exploit our professional relationships. We do not directly or indirectly demand, solicit or accept rewards, bribes, substantial gifts, gratuities, testimonials or benefits in respect to our work, with the exception of appropriate fees for our work.

We avoid conflicts of interest. In particular, we do not:

- sell products to our clients unless we reasonably believe that they will be of benefit for the clinically assessed need;
- conduct a private practice in competition with our employer without appropriate disclosures and consents; or
- use the resources of employers for private gain without express permission.

We proactively anticipate, disclose and resolve any potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

Examples where actual or potential conflict of interest situations may arise include:

- provision of services to a member of our family or someone with whom we have a close personal, business or professional relationship;
- working across multiple roles or for multiple employers;
- the selection, employment or supervision of a member of our family or someone with whom we have a close personal, business or professional relationship; and
- referring clients to those with whom we have a personal relationship, except where the referral is clinically necessary and undertaken in a professional manner.

#### **2.4 Service planning and provision**

At all times we endeavour to ensure our services are accessible and there is equity of access to services for our clients; such equity being determined by objective consideration of need and not compromised by prejudice or favour.

We are innovative and evaluate the services we provide on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are as efficient and effective as possible.

We work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to develop services that are culturally safe and responsive to their needs. We recognise, value and embed the skills, knowledges and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our work.

We ensure services we provide are responsive to the individual's diverse culture and context.

Where cessation of services is necessary, we do so in an objective, respectful manner that considers clinical need, continuity of service, and in line with

our service agreements and the Code of Ethics.

We advocate for the provision of services to a client where a need is identified.

Our practice reflects the contexts and interests of our clients and the community and is responsive to need.

We act with integrity, diligence and honesty when accessing and managing funding provisions for our services.

We protect the well-being of clients when delegating the delivery and administration of speech pathology services.

We have the equipment and resources we need, in order to provide services that we offer.

We do not guarantee the results of a therapeutic procedure or of prescribed devices or interventions.

We inform clients of the potential outcomes of a therapeutic procedure or prescribed device that can be reasonably expected based on the best available evidence.

We act ethically and legally when we own or manage a business.

#### **2.5 Safety and welfare**

We comply with all relevant legislation, standards and procedures in order to avoid physical and psychological injury to ourselves and others.

The equipment we use is accurate, well maintained, in proper working order, and we are trained and competent in its use.

We act on suspicion of harm and we comply with reporting requirements.



# Knowledge

## 3.1 Research

Research is undertaken to add to the evidence base for speech pathology and its translation into practice.

- When we undertake research, we develop and use protocols, and conduct research in a manner which complies with standards accepted by the health and scientific community we:
  - obtain approval, where required, for research projects and other scholarly activities, including ethics approval for studies;
  - ensure that research protocols comply with all relevant laws and standards;
  - act with integrity, diligence and honesty when accessing and managing research funding;
  - ensure research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities aligns with ethical guidelines identified by the Speech Pathology Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee;
  - respond to the diverse context of the individuals and/or communities involved in the research and complying with specific ethical guidelines that apply to that context;
  - ensure that participation in research does not needlessly delay or prevent access to evidence-informed methods of assessment or intervention;

- use peer review processes to evaluate research before presenting it to the public; and
- acknowledge other professionals in publications, presentations, or products when referencing their work or contribution.

## 3.2 Evidence based practice

We ensure our professional practice is underpinned by the best available and generally accepted evidence. We consider evidence from systematic research as well as the best available evidence from clinical practice and the preferences of a fully informed client.

We understand and act according to the strengths and limitations of the best available evidence to ensure beneficence and non-maleficence.

## 3.3 Current and emerging technology

When we make use of current and emerging technology, information and communication systems we do so in a professional, evidence-based manner.



## Important links

-  [International Classification of Functioning](#)
-  [UN declaration of human rights](#)
-  [UN declaration on the rights of indigenous people](#)
-  [UN declaration on the rights of persons with disabilities](#)
-  [National Health and Research Council](#)
-  [National Code of Conduct for health care workers](#)
-  [Fairwork Australia](#)



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Disclaimer

The Professional Standards and the Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics are integrated; they operate in parallel and in a complementary manner. While the documents might use slightly different language in relation to certain concepts, the language is intended to embody the same principles and any difference in that language does not derogate from the meaning or application of the principle under either document— the underlying intention and purpose of the principle is the prevailing consideration.

**2020**

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