



# Speech Language Pathologist

### Overview

Speech-language pathologists provide diagnosis and treatment for patients with communication and swallowing disorders. Speech-language pathologists are concerned with disorders of speech and language that impair communication.

Speech-language pathologists need good communication and analytical skills. They also need a high level of independent problem solving. Speech-language pathologists must excel in linguistic analysis and be highly efficient language users.

Thoughtfulness and empathy are also needed in order to help patients and their families understand the nature of the communication and swallowing problem, and the likely outcome of treatments. Continual upgrading of knowledge in the field is also essential.

Intervention for developmental or medical conditions may involve a variety of activities including one-to-one therapy, group therapy or consulting with parents and others. Intervention goals vary depending on the situation. For example, the goal may be to make a client's speech understandable, encourage language development or restore language use after a stroke.

Speech-language pathologists may specialize in working with people who have a particular type of disorder (for example, stuttering) or with a particular age group (for example, pre-school children). They often work in teams which may include audiologists, physicians, psychologists, social workers, nurses, teachers, educational assistants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, recreational therapists or speech-language assistants.

Speech-language pathologists use tools that range from books and toys, to linguistic analysis software, sophisticated sound analysers, and electronic communication devices. They may advocate for children and adults with language impairments, and work with other human service professionals to promote early education programs and improve services for school age children and adults.

### Main Roles & Responsibilities

Speech-language pathologist works with children and adults to prevent, assess, diagnose and provide treatment and counselling for speech, language, voice, fluency and swallowing disorders.

Speech-language pathologists work with people of all ages, from infants to adults. They help clients restore and improve their ability to communicate or swallow properly.

In general, speech-language pathologists:

- use a variety of formal and informal tests and procedures to assess and identify language, speech, voice, resonance, fluency and swallowing disorders
- develop and implement treatment plans
- provide consultation and intervention services
- counsel clients and families about communication and swallowing disorders
- design and use augmentative and alternative communication strategies and devices
- consult with others (for example, educators, caregivers) regarding speech and language stimulation, communication strategies, and teaching strategies for children and adults who have communication disorders
- consult with and advise other health professionals
- educate and supervise students, professionals, and support personnel in a variety of work settings
- work with multidisciplinary teams to assess and treat clients
- participate in research and public education activities.

### **Who is suited to become a speech-language pathologist?**

Speech-language pathologists need the following characteristics:

- excellent communication and social skills
- the intelligence and focus needed to finish the training
- sensitivity to client needs
- creative problem solving skills
- the ability to set priorities and handle multiple demands
- the ability to concentrate and pay close attention to details
- the ability to work effectively in a team environment.

They should enjoy working with people and their families, and exploring problems in depth.

### **Who employs speech language pathologists?**

Most speech-language pathologists are employed as clinicians by:

- private practice offices
- regional health authorities: including hospital settings, community health centres, and home care
- schools.

Some are employed as researchers in hospitals, universities and government agencies (a doctorate normally is needed) or as administrators of speech and hearing programs.

Most speech-language pathologists work in clean, well-lit, and well-equipped offices. The majority work in hospitals, schools or community clinics. Other working environments include rehabilitations centres, colleges and universities, health departments, government agencies and research laboratories. Some choose to be in private practice and work in their own offices.

Some speech-language pathologists provide home health care. This involves a lot of daily travel, especially in small communities.

Speech-language pathologists generally work standard weekday office hours. They also may be required to travel to a variety of locations (for example, community health centres, day care centres, hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation centres, schools, clients' homes). Full-time professionals in this group generally work a 36-hour week, which may include working evenings and weekends to meet clients' needs.

## **Salary**

Salary Range - \$58,696 - \$79,763

## **Required Training and Education to Become this Professional**

### General High School Admissions Requirements

The education requirement for speech-language pathologists is a master's degree in speech-language pathology.

Certification by the national professional association (the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)) involves an examination and review of educational accomplishments. In BC, all Speech-language pathologists must be registered member of the College of Speech and Hearing Health Professionals of BC. The College requires all professionals in BC to have a master's degree, and to successfully complete the CASLPA examination.

Workers already licensed or certified in another province or territory in a provincially regulated occupation will have their credentials recognized in BC For more detailed information, contact the provincial regulator. A list of provincial regulators can be found at:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/labourmobility>

## **Career Advancement**

Job satisfaction in this occupation is generally high, due in part to the variety, challenge, and independence that are inherent in these fields. Members of both professions tend to stay in their fields for long periods of time.

Recent graduates often get positions in public health clinics and non-profit child development agencies.

Advancement of speech-language pathologists to supervisory, management, or administrative positions can happen through experience and training, although, opportunities for such advancement are limited.

Advanced certifications in specialized areas of practice (e.g., videofluoroscopy) are available.

## **Resources**

## **Educational Programs**

University of Alberta

<http://www.speechpathologyandaudiology.ualberta.ca/en/ProspectiveStudents/Admissions.aspx>

University of British Columbia

<http://www.audiospeech.ubc.ca/why-study-with-us>

Dalhousie University

<http://humancommunicationdisorders.dal.ca/Prospective%20Students/>

University of Ottawa

<http://www.health.uottawa.ca/sr/slp/adm.htm>

University of Toronto

<http://www.slp.utoronto.ca/admissions/>

University of Western Ontario Admission:

[http://www.uwo.ca/fhs/csd/academic\\_information/admissions.html](http://www.uwo.ca/fhs/csd/academic_information/admissions.html)

University of Montréal

<http://www.eoa.umontreal.ca/etudes/admission/index.html>

McGill University

Admissions: <http://www.mcgill.ca/scsd/programs/slp>

Laval University

<http://w3.fmed.ulaval.ca/readaptation/index.php?id=899>

## **Financial assistance and bursaries**

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada\\_student\\_loan/index.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/learning/canada_student_loan/index.shtml)

## **Associations**

BC Association of Speech Language Pathologists:

<http://www.bcaslpa.ca/>

Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists:

<http://www.caslpa.ca/>

[http://www.caslpa.ca/PDF/university\\_survey\\_%202010\\_speech.pdf](http://www.caslpa.ca/PDF/university_survey_%202010_speech.pdf)

American Association of Speech Language Pathologists:

<http://www.asha.org/>