



PRACTICE ADVICE

FAQS: REDEPLOYMENT AND COVID-19

EFFECTIVE: APRIL 2020

These FAQs apply to current patient care. Please stay in contact with the College. We will inform you if any of the answers change because of Ministry directives.

Here at CASLPO we have received many questions from audiologists and speech-language pathologists on how to manage redeployment and work refusal during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have included two FAQs here and will develop others as different challenges arise. Always remember, prevent transmitting the virus, keep your patients safe and keep yourself safe.

Question: Can my employer direct me to do other tasks during a pandemic?

Answer: Yes. As audiologists and SLPs, you may be asked to assist where you can within your organization (for example, in a hospital) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 21, 2020, the order made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* states that health service providers are authorized to take, with respect to work deployment and staffing, any reasonably necessary measure to respond to, prevent and alleviate the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) for patients. (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20074>). This means that Health Service Providers have the authority to identify staff priorities and develop, modify and implement redeployment plans including the following:

- i. redeploying staff within different locations in (or between) facilities of the particular Health Service Provider;
- ii. redeploying staff to work in COVID-19 Assessment Centres;
- iii. changing the assignment of work, including assigning non-bargaining unit employees or contractors to perform bargaining unit work;
- iv. changing the scheduling of work or shift assignments;
- v. deferring or cancelling vacations, absences or other leaves, regardless of whether such vacations, absences or leaves are established by statute, regulation, agreement or otherwise;
- vi. employing extra part-time or temporary staff or contractors, including for the purposes of performing bargaining unit work;
- vii. using volunteers to perform work, including to perform bargaining unit work; and
- viii. providing appropriate training or education as needed to staff and volunteers to achieve the purposes of a redeployment plan.

As audiologists and SLPs, work with your manager or organization lead, if you are redeployed to ensure the following:

- you receive the required training to work in any new capacity
- infection prevention and control measures are taken for patient safety as well as your own safety, as per the Ministry of Health's guidelines and your own organization
- when completing additional clinical roles beyond your scope of practice under another health care professional's supervision, document in the health records, as required

- when completing other tasks, e.g., tasks related to COVID-19 screening, document as per your employer's directions
- appropriate professional liability insurance is in place in the expanded role and responsibilities you are performing
- you only perform controlled acts if delegated by a health professional who has the authority to delegate the specific controlled act(s).

As a health care worker there is always an inherent risk in the job you do. In these extraordinary times, thank you for providing these vital services to others. You are valued and appreciated in stepping up and filling the need for additional support.

Question: I work part-time in a hospital and am concerned about practising during the epidemic. Do I have the right to refuse to work?

Answer: No. Under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, certain workers have restrictions placed upon their right to refuse work. Those employed in the operation of a hospital, long-term care home, psychiatric institution, mental health centre or rehabilitation facility are generally not entitled to refuse work when:

1. The work at issue is inherent in their work or is a normal condition of their employment, or
2. When the work refusal would directly endanger the life, health and safety of another person.

These restrictions also apply in a pandemic. Registrants should be aware that these restrictions would likely not apply in cases where an audiologist or an SLP has been asked to work on the front lines and are not provided the requisite protective equipment. Should you have concerns, you are encouraged to speak with your supervisor, contact your infection prevention and control department, contact the Ministry of Labour or speak with a lawyer versed in employment law.