



PANDEMIC PRACTICE ADVICE 5: PHYSICAL DISTANCE IN CLINICS AND COMMUNITY

EFFECTIVE: MAY 19, 2020

REVISED – EFFECTIVE: MAY 26, 2020

Revision: Restrictions for in-person non-essential services have been amended. All deferred and non-essential services can be gradually restarted.

Please consult the website regularly for potential revisions to these documents.

These Information sheets are intended to help audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to provide in-person patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The information sheets include three different types of information:

- 1) **Requirements** – Legislation, regulations and College standards
- 2) **Principles** – Information from various agencies
- 3) **Suggestions** – Ideas on how to proceed

REQUIREMENTS:

- People outside the home must stay two metres or 6 feet away from other people to reduce the risk of spreading the virus ([Public Health Ontario Physical Distancing](#)).
- Use your knowledge, skills and judgement on how to gradually restart all in-person services and decide what portions of the patient care can be provided virtually [Directive 2 for Health Care Providers](#).

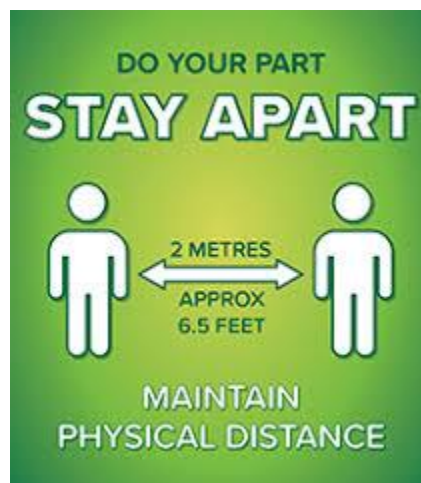
PRINCIPLES:

- Ministry of Health [COVID-19 Primary Care Providers in a Community Setting](#) and [COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#) recommend:
 - Provide as much patient care as possible using virtual care technologies to reduce virus spread
 - Complete as many office and administrative tasks from home as possible
 - Consider what tasks can be carried out outside regular hours
 - Suspend all in-person group therapy, education or support programs
 - Avoid all physical greetings such as hand shakes, 'high fives' etc.
- **Office and Clinic**
 - Redesign the physical setting to minimize contact between individuals

- Minimize the number of office staff in the clinic
 - Stagger work times and breaks for audiologists, SLPs and support staff
 - Spread out appointment times to avoid more than one patient waiting in the waiting room
 - Ask just the patient to attend the appointment and for others to wait outside the clinic, for example, in the car. If that is not possible, ask for only one other person to accompany the patient
 - Reduce the number of clinic rooms/sound proof booths being used at one time
 - Reception staff and staff carrying out COVID-19 screens should be behind a plexiglass barrier
 - Ask all staff and patients to remain two metres apart from each other for all or as much of the assessment or treatment session as possible
 - If you previously allowed “walk-in” enquiries, restrict access through using a system of line ups with taped lines on the floor to maintain physical distancing, or prohibit walk-ins
- **Community**
 - When contacting the patient to make an appointment explain that you will be practicing physical distancing as much as possible
 - Ask the patient to be ready for the appointment time and for all other people in the home to be in a different room
 - Remain two metres apart from each other for all or as much of the assessment or treatment session as possible

SUGGESTIONS:

- Put up signs in the waiting room and on your website about your physical distance requirements. The public you serve will be assured that you are doing your part to keep them safe.
- Download the poster to put up in waiting rooms and treatment areas



We cannot predict the consequences of the return to work, consequently further guidance may be added or changed. Also, as a self-regulated professional you must always use your

professional judgement. The College's [Practice Advice team](#) is here to discuss issues with you.