



College of Audiologists and
Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
Ordre des audiologistes et
des orthophonistes de l'Ontario

CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE PROVISION OF AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES IN ONTARIO

PREAMBLE

The Code of Ethics embodies the principles and rules that audiologists and speech-language pathologists are expected to observe in choosing the fair, equitable and just action in any given professional situation. Audiologists and speech-language pathologists shall maintain high standards of conduct in their practices and relationships with patients, the public and other professionals.

The Code of Ethics is a companion document and should be applied with relevant legislation, regulations, standards, and guides. At times there is overlap within these documents as requirements may be both ethical and legal. The Code of Ethics is applicable in all practice, education, and research environments.

If there are any questions regarding ethical decisions, seek out additional guidance. You can also contact [Practice Advice](#).

PRINCIPLES

The four principles support audiologists and speech-language pathologists in ethical reasoning and decision making. They should be viewed as interdependent and equally important.

The principles have been adapted from ethical healthcare principles: respect for autonomy, beneficence (to do good) and non-maleficence (do no harm). The principle of accountability (fidelity) is commonly used in the field of healthcare regulation ethics.

1. PATIENT AUTONOMY: acknowledge and respect the rights of patients to make informed choices and decisions about their health care.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists shall respect patients' and substitute decision makers' (SDM) rights to:

- a) collaborate in all clinical decisions and be informed of the nature of the services and the potential risks and benefits;
- b) decline all or part of the service delivery plan;
- c) discontinue the service at any time;
- d) explore alternative service options; and
- e) privacy and confidentiality.

2. PATIENT BENEFIT: protect and act in the best interests of patients using knowledge, skill, and judgement to provide quality, competent care, and treating all patients justly and fairly.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists shall:

- a) not discriminate against any individual patient, significant other, colleague or person you supervise based on any prohibited grounds listed in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#);
- b) provide patient-centred care that recognises and respects diversity and is equitable and inclusive;
- c) advocate for patients and families when appropriate;
- d) use all reasonable resources to ensure that quality, evidence-based service is provided;
- e) recommend referrals to the appropriate professional for the elements of care the audiologist or speech-language pathologist is unable to provide;
- f) educate patients or SDMs of programs and services from which they may benefit; and
- g) collaborate and communicate effectively with all involved, as appropriate.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY: take personal responsibility for behaviour, actions and decisions and act with integrity. Be responsible for advancing public trust in the professions.

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists shall:

- a) act in a professional and respectful manner in all their practices and professional relationships;
- b) be honourable and truthful in all their practices and professional relationships;
- c) accept responsibility and disclose errors and harm to the patient and initiate steps to mitigate the harm;.
- d) exercise independent professional judgement throughout the provision of any professional service;
- e) practice within the limits of their competence as determined by education, training and professional experience;
- f) work within their scope of practice as determined by legislation;
- g) develop and maintain professional relationships with the patient and all involved with the patient's care in all environments;
- h) maintain the standards and dignity of the profession in all communications, advertising, media and social media;
- i) set reasonable fee structures based on fair values for services and products; and
- j) ensure that all service delivery options, service limitations and fees for services and products are clear, accurate, and discussed prior to the initiation of services.

4. DO NO HARM: be diligent in efforts to do no harm, assess risk of harm and, whenever possible, prevent harm from occurring

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists shall **not**:

- a) engage in sexual relationships with any patients and shall not disregard professional boundaries in the health care relationship;
- b) verbally, physically, emotionally or sexually harass a patient;
- c) let personal or financial factors create a conflict of interest;
- d) allow outside activities or affiliations such as those related to religion, politics, culture affect the service provided;
- e) engage in unethical business or management practices;
- f) practice if a physical or mental impairment, condition or disorder affects their ability to provide services effectively or safely;
- g) provide services in a manner that discredits the professions of audiology or speech-language pathology or diminishes the public's trust in either profession; and

h) misrepresent credentials, competence, education, training, or experience.

REFERENCES:

- The Principles of Biomedical Ethics (1979) Beauchamp T L and Childress J F
- Ontario College of Pharmacists (2015). Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.ocpinfo.com/library/council/download/CodeofEthics2015.pdf>
- College of Dietitians of Ontario (2019). Code of Ethics Retrieved from [College of Dietitians - Code of Ethics \(2019\)](#)