



A CODE OF PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR SPEECH - LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

The following code of ethics of the Association of Speech-Language Pathologists (ASLP) created for all registered Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) sets out the fundamental rules considered essential to maintain professional standards in the provision of speech and language services. These are also in line with the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct laid out by the Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine (CPCM).

1. Part V, Article 25 (1) of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) lays down that no person shall practice the profession of speech language pathology unless they are registered with The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine. One can refer to CPCM register online
<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/regcounc/cpcm/Documents/Speech%20Language%20Pathology%20Registers.pdf>
2. Speech-Language Therapist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Speech Therapist, Communication Therapist and Logopedist are all terms to describe the professional working with communication and swallowing difficulties. Any person claiming any of the above titles must have his name on the Speech- Language Therapy register of the CPCM, in order to be permitted to assess, diagnose and treat communication and swallowing difficulties. This, according to Part VI, Title II, Section 26 of the Health Care Professions Act 2000.
3. As a professional group, SLPs are committed to provide the best possible service to clients, having due regard to the established and accepted code of practice, Section 257 of the Criminal Code of Malta cap.9 and Section D, paragraph (4) of the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct regarding confidentiality on personal health information laid down by the CPCM; being mindful of their state registered status.
4. SLPs should acknowledge that their personal conduct may jeopardise confidence in them. SLPs must limit or interrupt their professional activities where the temporary impairment of competence or confidence might have damaging consequences for clients or the profession.



5. SLPs should at all times act in such a manner as to justify public trust and confidence, to uphold and enhance the good standing and reputation of the profession, and to serve the public interest and the interests of clients.
6. In fulfilment of professional responsibility and in the exercise of professional accountability, SLPs shall:

(A) With reference to their profession

1. Comply with the provisions of Part I of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) and with any other laws affecting the profession.
2. Be accountable for their work.
3. Recognize the limits of their professional competence and in the interest of their clients make referral to other professionals where the limits are exceeded.
4. Take every reasonable opportunity to sustain and improve their knowledge and professional competence.
5. Be prepared to request additional training/support when they perceive the need.
6. Ensure their professional responsibilities and standards of practice are not unduly influenced by considerations of religion, sex, race, nationality, political parties, social or economic status or nature of a client's health problems.
7. Refuse to accept any gift, favor or hospitality that might be interpreted as seeking to exact undue influence to obtain preferential treatment.
8. Avoid advertising or signing an advertisement using their professional qualification(s) to encourage the sale of commercial products.



(B) With reference to relationships with client

1. Have regard to the customs, values, spiritual beliefs and human dignity of clients.
2. Have regard to the physical, psychological and physiological needs of clients and the effects on them of the hospital/clinic environment.
3. Avoid any abuse of the privileged relationship with clients or the privileged access to their property.
4. At all times act in such a way as to promote and safeguard the well-being and interests of clients for whose care they are professionally accountable and ensure that by no action or omission on their part their condition or safety is placed at risk.
5. SLPs should recognize that any information obtained from or acquired by them about clients is confidential within the limits of the law. They should only communicate information about a client to others with the client's permission when it is in the client's best interest to do so, and usually only to others directly involved in client's care. SLPs are to refer to section 257 of the Criminal Code of Malta Cap. 2 which stipulates such conditions and penalties liable if professional secret is breached.

(C) With reference to relationships with colleagues

1. Ensure that no unqualified person exercises the profession of SLP, and attends in any manner to any matter requiring professional knowledge or skill, or acts as if they are duly qualified or registered. Nothing in this paragraph is to be regarded as affecting the proper training of bona fide students, provided that effective supervision is exercised over them.
2. Accept a responsibility relevant to their professional experience for assisting peers and subordinates to develop professional competence.
3. Have due regard to the workload of, and the pressures on, professional colleagues and subordinates and take appropriate action if these are seen to be such as to endanger safe standards of practice.



4. Have regard to physical working conditions and adequacy of resources and make known to the appropriate authority if these endanger safe standards of practice in any way.
5. Work in a collaborative and co-operative manner with other professionals.
6. Ensure that unethical conduct and illegal professional activities are reported directly to CPCM or ASLP.

(D) With reference to unprofessional conduct

1. SLPs must not guarantee the results of any speech-language, hearing and/or dysphagia consultative or therapeutic procedure. A guarantee of any sort, expressed or implied, oral or written, is contrary to professional ethics. A reasonable statement of prognosis may be made, but successful results are dependent on many uncontrollable factors, hence, any warranty is deceptive and unethical.
2. SLPs must diagnose or treat communication and/or swallowing disorders only following assessment.
3. SLPs must not exploit persons they serve professionally by
 - a. accepting them for treatment where benefit cannot reasonably be expected to accrue
 - b. continuing treatment unnecessarily.
4. Any fees need to be communicated honestly prior to the start of any service.
5. By any act of omission do anything or cause anything to be done which they have reasonable grounds to believe is likely either to endanger or adversely affect in a substantial way the client's health and/or safety.
6. Hold themselves out as a person who by training and experience are professionally qualified to diagnose or treat any condition outside the competence of the profession.
7. SLPs should recognise the need for the dissemination of information about speech and language pathology and therapy. They should not abuse such dissemination of



information by including laudatory statements on their own personal professional expertise.

8. SLPs must not knowingly disclose to unauthorized persons, the results or any other information of personal or confidential nature gained in the course of practice in their profession.

(E) Advertising and canvassing

1. Advertising by SLPs in respect of provision of SLP services as well as professional activities such as talks and workshops shall be accurate and professionally restrained in terms of qualifications, area of special interest, professional remit and registration number, keeping in line with the above articles in this code of ethics.
2. It is unethical to solicit to potential service users, whether such solicitations are made physically or through any form of communication.
3. Advertisement whether written, or audio-visual, should reflect the truth and should not be, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, self-laudatory, unfair or sensational.
4. Claims should not be made extolling superiority of personal skills, equipment or facilities. One cannot promote oneself through any professional comparison or/ and years of experience insinuating that they are above or better than other professionals.
5. While it is correct for SLPs to publicise their profession and practice, they should act in a restrained manner with regards to their personal professional practice.
6. Signs and professional sign plates should be dignified and professionally restrained, and shall indicate the Speech Language Pathologist's name, qualifications, any other diplomas or degrees registrable by The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine, the title and clear guidance of attendance.
7. Advertisement, promotion, recommendation or advice given by SLP/s should clearly indicate the name of SLP/s, qualifications, titles and CPCM registration number. This includes any printed or social media as well as website.

(F) Telepractice



1. Telepractice refers to the “application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology services at a distance by linking clinician to client or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.” (ASHA, 2021).
2. Delivery of sessions via telepractice are subject to the same clauses of the code of ethics and code of conduct as in face-to-face sessions.
3. Regardless of the platform used, clients’ privacy always needs to be a priority.
4. In order to provide high quality telepractice, the SLP should consider the environment and the location of both the client and the SLP. It is important to evaluate distractions, noise level, light and comfort prior to beginning a session.
5. There are no inherent limits to where telepractice can be implemented as long as the services comply with professional regulations and policies, and professional standards are maintained.
6. Telephone communication is not to be considered as a means of telepractice.

(G) Social media

1. Social media refers to a “computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities...which gives users quick electronic communication of content” (Dollarhide, 2021).
2. Comments and reactions by SLPs on posts where they are tagged should not solicit any sensational self-promotion.
3. SLPs should be aware that social media is visible not just to the person they are responding to but a much wider audience, hence the SLP should be responsible,



cautious and respectful to professional boundaries in their comments.

4. SLPs are urged to exercise good judgement by avoiding any personal attacks towards others while using social media.
5. It is prohibited to post a seemingly innocent comment that could potentially allow others to identify the client.
6. Any blogs, pages, posters offering SLP advice and advertising should clearly outline name, qualifications and CPCM registration number of the SLP.
7. In addition, SLPs should be aware of any ethical code regarding the use of social media at their place of work.

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