



Position Paper:

Audiology Assistants

Recommendations for scope of practice



Contact

Audiology Australia

Suite 7, 476 Canterbury Road

FOREST HILL VIC 3131

Phone: 03 9877 2727

Fax: 03 9877 0645

Email: info@audiology.asn.au



Introduction and Rationale

This position paper defines the recommended scope of practice of audiology assistants in audiological service delivery in Australia. This paper is written with members of Audiology Australia and current/potential employers of audiology assistants in mind.

Increasingly, the services of audiology assistants are required to perform specific tasks relating to the provision of audiology services to meet the needs of clients in a cost effective way, without compromising client care and outcomes.

Definition

It is the purpose of this position paper to define the recommended scope of practice of the audiology assistant as a person who, after appropriate *training* and *demonstration of competency*, performs supporting tasks under the *supervision* of a qualified audiologist holding a current Certificate of Clinical Practice with Audiology Australia. The scope of practice of the assistant is to enable the audiologist to perform the complex, evaluative, diagnostic, management and treatment services, for which they are appropriately trained.

Position statement

It is the position of Audiology Australia that audiology assistants can be utilised successfully in supporting the delivery of high quality audiological services in Australia. An audiologist should supervise the tasks of an audiology assistant wherein the highest standard of client care must always be paramount. Audiology Australia acknowledges that audiology assistants may be of considerable value to an organisation to support audiological service delivery. Audiologists, by virtue of their education and training, are the appropriate and only qualified professionals to supervise audiology assistants.



Recommended scope of practice of an audiology assistant

The scope of practice assigned to an audiology assistant will be based on their training, supervision and practice setting and must be limited to activities that do not require audiological judgement. Examples of the types of tasks an audiology assistant may undertake are listed below:

- room preparation;
- infection prevention and control procedures;
- administrative support for reports;
- inventory management;
- appointment scheduling and management;
- occupational health and safety audits;
- database management;
- equipment and device repairs;
- minor hearing aid repairs and maintenance;
- demonstration of hearing aids and assistive listening devices;
- helping people to use, handle and maintain hearing aids;
- fitting and issue of earmoulds, pro-plugs and ear wraps; and
- performing hearing screening (limited to assessments with a pass/fail or refer outcome) in accordance with protocols under direct supervision of a qualified audiologist.

Training and demonstration of competency

The recommended education level for an audiology assistant is completion of a secondary school certificate and competency based workplace training. Tasks performed by an audiology assistant would therefore require competency assessment and involvement of an audiologist in the training process. Additional education and training in first aid, infection control and privacy



in a medical setting is recommended as well as on the job training for the specific tasks outlined below.

Audiology Australia strongly encourages employers of audiology assistants, or those considering employment of audiology assistants, to provide a clearly defined and structured role in their documentation. In addition to duties that are consistent with audiology assistants' scope of practice, employment conditions should incorporate:

- duty statements that clearly specify activities performed in the role;
- competency-based recruitment and evaluation of performance;
- direct and indirect supervision by an audiologist for specific duties; and
- a pathway for professional development of the audiology assistant, including support to complete accredited audiology or audiometry courses, where feasible.

The effective use of assistants in the workplace would also be determined by:

- development of suitable workplace protocols and procedures;
- on-going training, supervision and support of the assistant;
- provision of available physical resources;
- planning and co-ordination of activities, resources and time;
- effective and clear communication between audiologist and assistant; and
- evaluation of client outcomes

Those who employ and/or supervise audiology assistants shall maintain legal and ethical responsibility for all services provided by the assistants. Employers should be aware of the need to identify and mitigate potential risks associated with employment of audiology assistants.

Supervision

An audiologist responsible for the supervision of an audiology assistant must work in accordance with Audiology Australia's Code of Conduct. In particular, Section 3 advises



members about protection of client safety and delegation of activities, and Section 8 provides guidance about appropriate supervision of support personnel. A single audiology assistant may provide support for multiple audiologists. The number of audiology assistants a single audiologist can be responsible for will be consistent with ensuring the highest quality client care. The supervision responsibility includes on-going supervision of competency and training and related administrative duties.

Summary

Audiology Australia supports the use of audiology assistants to perform tasks when the outcome better enables audiologists to deliver the highest standard of client care. To ensure service quality is maintained and to mitigate risk to clients, professional staff and employers, Audiology Australia strongly recommends the audiology assistant role is clearly defined in its employment conditions and that tasks that require specialised training are not performed without that training. Members are advised to consult with Audiology Australia for guidance if they have any reason for concern or identify any unacceptable issues regarding the development or implementation of an assistant role. Audiology assistants can apply to be Affiliates of Audiology Australia.



References:

Hearing the Need – Audiology and Primary Health Care Reform (ASA, November 2010)

<http://www.audiology.asn.au/>

Audiology Australia's Primary health care position statement

http://www.audiology.asn.au/pdf/policy/Audiology_Australia_Primary_Health_Care_Position_Statement.pdf

Audiology Australia's *Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct and Professional and Clinical Practice Standards.*

<http://www.audiology.asn.au/>

AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and guidelines

<http://infostore.saiglobal.com/store/Details.aspx?ProductID=1378670>

Smith, R. and Duffy, J. (2010). Developing a competent and flexible workforce using the Calderdale Framework. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 17 (5) 254-262.

http://www.ijtr.co.uk/cgi-bin/go.pl/library/contents.html?uid=3027;journal_uid=16