



Scope of Practice for Audiologists

This scope of practice document was developed by the New Zealand Audiology Society (NZAS) Standards Subcommittee in consultation with the membership of the NZAS. It has been endorsed by the Executive Council of the NZAS as accurately representing the roles and professional practices of New Zealand audiologists, and the intended outcomes of audiology services.

Introduction

The Purpose of this Scope of Practice statement is to:

- (a) define the services offered by appropriately qualified audiologists
- (b) serve as an educational and reference tool for other health professionals, consumers, and members of the general public who seek to understand the role of an audiologist.
- (c) provide information to assist policy makers concerned with regulation, legislation, and third party reimbursement
- (d) outline to full and provisional members of the NZAS and student audiologists the activities which require certification in audiology.

This document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of activities which audiologists engage in; however it reflects current practice within the profession of audiology in New Zealand. New practice activities which develop from clinical, technological and scientific advances will also become part of the scope of practice of an audiologist. Therefore this document will require regular revision and updating to allow for innovations and advances in the field of audiology. It is also accepted that some of the activities described may also be within the scope of practice of other related health professionals.

Definition of an Audiologist

Audiologists are autonomous providers of hearing health care. They specialise in the prevention, identification, assessment, diagnosis, management and treatment of disorders of the auditory, balance and other related neural systems. Audiologists provide habilitation and rehabilitation to infants, children and adults. Audiologists select, fit and dispense amplification systems such as hearing aids, FM systems, cochlear implants and classroom amplification systems. Audiologists help prevent hearing loss through the provision and fitting of hearing protection, consultation on the effects of noise on hearing and consumer education. Audiologists work as clinicians, researchers, therapists, educators, consultants, administrators and business persons. Audiologists serve as expert witnesses in litigation related to their areas of expertise.

Audiologists currently hold a masters or doctoral degree or equivalent (equivalency is determined by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the NZAS membership



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sub-committee) in audiology from an accredited university. Audiologists who are full members of the NZAS complete a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) which requires a minimum 11 months supervised clinical practice followed by a set of practical and written/oral exams. Audiologists in the process of completing their CCC are considered provisional members of the NZAS. To maintain NZAS membership, audiologists must hold a current continuing education certificate which is renewed annually after completion of peer review and approved professional educational activities. The NZAS Standards Sub-Committee has developed standards of practice for the procedures described in this and other NZAS documents which members ascribe to.

Audiologists serve diverse populations including persons of different age, race, religion, gender, country of origin and sexual orientation. Their caseloads can include people from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and persons with disabilities.

Audiologists accept self referrals and receive referrals for their services from healthcare professionals, educators, government agencies, private organisations and community groups. Audiologists provide services in a range of environments including hospital departments, maternity units, private practices, doctors' offices, community health centres and schools. They provide education in universities to audiology, speech language therapy and medical students, and to hearing screeners and other related professionals.

The NZAS admits into full membership of that Society employees of hearing aid importation and distribution firms and other related organisations where the individuals concerned meet the requirements of full or associate membership of the NZAS. The NZAS considers it appropriate that these audiologists should maintain their membership of NZAS so that professional standards are upheld within all spheres of practice.

Scope of Practice

i) Identification

- Management, supervision and provision of advice on neonatal screening programmes, and coordination with long-term audiological services for children with hearing impairment and their families. The goal is to have all infants who have been identified and referred from the screening programmes diagnosed by 3 months of age and their habilitation underway by 6 months of age.
- Development and oversight of other hearing screening programmes which aim at the early detection of hearing and related problems to achieve the best possible outcome for those participating in the programmes
- Training and supervision of non audiologist staff to provide these programmes in a variety of health and education settings



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ii) Assessment and Diagnosis

- Identification, diagnosis and management of hearing loss or disorders of the auditory and balance system in clients of all ages including infants and children with developmental delay and multiple disabilities. These activities include the conduct and interpretation of otoscopic examination and safe and appropriate cerumen management, behavioural, electro-acoustic and electro-physiological tests.
- Measurement and interpretation of sensory and motor evoked potentials and other electro-diagnostic tests for assessment and intra-operative neural monitoring of the VIIth and VIIIth cranial nerves. Client groups include persons with conductive or sensorineural hearing loss, retrocochlear pathology, auditory processing disorders, hyperacusis or tinnitus.

iv) Rehabilitation/Habilitation

- Provision of the full range of habilitative and rehabilitative services to clients; this includes the design, management and evaluation of needs' assessments and individual audiological plans.
- Making impressions of the ear canal for provision of prosthetic devices for hearing protection or treatment.
- Selection, fitting, evaluation of hearing devices and facilitation of adjustment to hearing devices, including all styles of hearing aids, tinnitus treatment instruments, sensory aids, cochlear implants, FM systems, assistive listening devices (ALDs), alerting systems and telecommunication systems.
- Measuring outcomes of hearing interventions such as hearing aids and monitoring their continuous use.
- Individual/group counseling for psychosocial adjustment to hearing loss for people with hearing impairment and their families/caregivers.
- Provision of counseling and therapy for persons with tinnitus, hyperacusis, balance dysfunction and auditory processing disorders.
- Provision of audiological rehabilitation including informational counseling, communication management, auditory and communication skill development, speech-reading and language development.
- Provision of services and advice on acoustics as related to hearing loss particularly in relation to schools, workplaces and the home.

v) Case management

- Case management and service as a liaison facilitator for the consumer, family and public/private agencies monitoring and managing audiological status and making educational, social and vocational recommendations.
- Consultation to members of multidisciplinary teams (such as advisors on deaf children, special education services, otolaryngologists, speech language therapists, psychologists, paediatricians, etc), regarding educational concerns, communication management, language and auditory skill development, and psychosocial adjustment to hearing loss.



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- Identification of need for and provision of referrals to other health professionals and assimilation of relevant information.
- Explanation of and discussion about audiological and related reports and results with clients and their carers/family.

vi) Hearing Conservation

- Prevention of hearing loss and retention of normal hearing function by designing, implementing and coordinating occupational, school, and community hearing loss prevention, hazardous sound awareness and hearing loss identification programmes.
- Training of non-audiologists to perform hearing screening
- Provision of and counseling in the use of protective hearing devices such as ear plugs and muffs.
- Conducting audiological screening and monitoring hearing in those with occupational or recreational risk of noise induced hearing loss.

vii) Education and Research

- Education and administration in audiology postgraduate and educational programmes.
- Participation in the development of professional and technical standards.
- Development and implementation of audiological research to increase and update knowledge of theoretical concepts, measure effectiveness of current assessment and treatment methods and to develop new assessment and re/habilitative approaches.
- Measurement of functional outcomes, consumer satisfaction, effectiveness, efficiency, and cost benefits of products, practices and programmes to maintain and improve the quality of services to clients.

(viii) Administration and Supervision

- Administration and supervision of professional and technical personnel who provide support functions to the practice of audiology.
- Training and supervision of student audiologists and provisional NZAS members.
- Administration and management of publicly funded audiology programmes or contracted services, hospital audiology departments and privately owned audiology practices.

(ix) Consultancy

- Consultation to individuals, public and private agencies (such as third party reimbursers), and governmental bodies to explain and interpret audiological findings.
- Provision of expert witness testimony regarding legal interpretations of audiology findings, effects of hearing loss and balance system disorders, and relevant noise-related considerations.
- Consultation to industry on development of products and instrumentation

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related to measurement and management of auditory or balance function.



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References

References

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (1996, Spring). Scope of Practice in Audiology. ASHA, 38 (Suppl. 16), 12-15.
- American Academy of Audiology Scope of Practice. <http://www.audiology.org/>
- Canadian Association of Speech Language Pathologists Scope of Practice <http://www.caslpa.ca/english/resources/scopes.asp>
- NZAS Standards of Clinical Practice and the CCC and CEP documentation. The NZAS Constitution.