



## Speech and Hearing BC

### Did you know?

- Less than 1% of residents in Long Term Care saw a Speech-Language Pathologist in 2019-2020 due to lack of government funding.
- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) can provide important and meaningful services to people in Long Term Care.

**Speech and Hearing BC needs your support as we advocate for funding from the Government of BC.**

Here are some of the reasons we should: Think **SPEAK** in Long-Term Care.

**SPEAK = Speech, Participation, Eating/Drinking, Autonomy, Knowledge**

### Speech:

- ***75% of residents in Long-Term Care have communication difficulties***

Many people lose the ability to say what they want, and/or understand those around them due to aging, disease or brain injury. This can lead to feelings of loneliness, loss of independence, and depression.

SLPs can provide strategies and treatment to help people with communication difficulties participate in meaningful interactions with their family, friends, and care team, and improve quality of life for those living in Long Term Care.

### Participation:

- ***Activities and participation can account for over 50% of a person's quality of life in long-term care***

Participating in day-to-day activities can be a challenge for people with communication and swallowing difficulties. Improving the ability to engage in activities or enjoy a meal with others is often a major goal for people in Long-Term Care. SLPs working in Long-Term Care can help people participate in meaningful activities. SLPs can train staff and family members to communicate better with residents.

## **Eating and Drinking:**

- ***Up to 40% of residents in LTC have difficulty swallowing.***

Swallowing difficulties usually look like coughing or choking during meals. Swallowing difficulties can happen in old age or because of disease. They can lead to chest infections like aspiration pneumonia, dehydration, and malnutrition. It can be hard for people with swallowing difficulties to notice the problem and explain it to others. People in long-term care are at a high risk of aspiration pneumonia because of their support needs-- such as needing help brushing their teeth, eating, and remaining active.

SLPs treat and make safety plans for people with swallowing difficulties so they can enjoy mealtime, or that morning cup of coffee.

## **Autonomy:**

Communication difficulties can make it hard for people to say what they need and want, so decisions are sometimes made for them. This loss of autonomy can reduce a person's sense of dignity and involvement in their care. SLPs can help people to understand and communicate their health and personal choices. For some, that may be using a communication device to choose a meal or an activity. For others, it may mean understanding their medications options and care plans.

## **Knowledge is Power:**

You now have some of the knowledge of the important roles SLPs can play in the care and treatment of people in Long-Term Care. Unfortunately, SLPs are not funded to provide any of the services described above. Please join Speech and Hearing BC in asking our government for more support for our families, neighbours, and friends who live in LTC.

Additional Resources:

- Speech and Audiology Canada Technical Brief Re: SLP and Audiology in LTC [https://www.sac-oac.ca/sites/default/files/resources/SAC-OAC-LTC\\_Technical\\_Brief-EN.pdf](https://www.sac-oac.ca/sites/default/files/resources/SAC-OAC-LTC_Technical_Brief-EN.pdf)
- What is Aphasia? <https://www.sac-oac.ca/news-events/news/speech-hearing-month-2021-what-aphasia>
- What is Dysphagia? <https://speechandhearing.ca/what-is-dysphagia/>
- National Long Term Care Services Standard: Provide Your Input <https://longtermcarestandards.ca/your-input>
- Tell Us Your Story: <https://speechandhearingbc.ca/tell-us-your-story/>

*References Available Upon Request.*

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