

Communication, Safety, and Care for Every Canadian

“1 in 6 Canadians live with a communication disorder — yet most face long wait times or limited access to care.”



Key Advocacy Asks

- **Expand the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program to include speech-language pathologists and audiologists, strengthening recruitment and retention in Canada’s health workforce.**
- **Modernize Health Canada’s medical device regulations to accelerate safe, evidence-based access to innovative devices, including over-the-counter hearing aids, for Canadians.**
- **Increase federal investment in Indigenous-led speech and hearing health initiatives and expand virtual/mobile care to improve access for Indigenous and remote communities.**

Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs), audiologists, and communication health assistants (CHAs) provide life-changing and essential services to Canadians. We help children learn, listen, speak, and engage in school; enable adults to remain in the workforce and maintain relationships; and allow seniors to stay in their homes longer, swallow safely, and communicate effectively with caregivers.

Health Human Resources

Canada’s communication health workforce faces significant pressures that limit access to care for Canadians. High workloads, limited resources, and burnout threatens the ability of S-LPs, audiologists, and CHAs to provide essential care to meet growing needs. To address these challenges, the federal government must:

- Expand the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program to include S-LPs and audiologists.
- Provide support and resources to provinces and territories to expand resources for (e.g., student placement bursaries) and access to, speech-language pathology and audiology graduate programs.
- Prioritize recruitment and retention of S-LPs, audiologists, and CHAs in Canada’s health workforce strategy.



Safe and Equitable Medical Device Access

Action is needed to ensure better health outcomes for people in Canada with hearing, speech, language, swallowing, and dizziness. This work includes ensuring access to safe, innovative, and appropriate medical devices for use by S-LPs, audiologists, and communication health assistants for assessment and treatment, and that the public has greater access to these medical devices, such as over the counter (OTC) hearing aids. To achieve this, the government must:

- Modernize Health Canada's regulatory processes to accelerate safe, evidence-based access to innovative devices for hearing, speech, swallowing, and balance care.
- Involve S-LPs, audiologists, and communication health assistants in policy development to ensure medical devices meet clinical standards and patient needs.
- Fund national campaigns to increase public awareness of safe and effective medical device options, including OTC hearing aids, to eliminate misinformation.



Access to Care in Indigenous and Remote Communities (Virtual Care)

As Canada invests in new health care delivery infrastructure, SAC is calling on policymakers to **design with connection and safety in mind**. This means consulting with S-LPs, audiologists and CHAs to ensure environments support those who cannot hear, speak, or swallow effectively. In Indigenous and remote communities, S-LPs and audiologists contribute not only to communication health but also to language revitalization and the preservation of Indigenous communication traditions. Yet access to these services remains limited in many regions. To close the gaps, SAC calls on the government to:

- Streamline the Jordan's Principle reimbursement processes to reduce administrative delay and increase accessibility.
- Increase federal investment in Indigenous-led speech and hearing health initiatives to improve access to culturally appropriate service delivery.
- Expand telehealth and mobile clinic programs to reach remote Indigenous communities where specialist services are limited or non-existent.



Infant and Child Health – Early Detection and Intervention

Hearing and communication are critical to a child's development. Even minor impairment can have cascading effects on learning, socialization, and long-term well-being. Early detection and intervention are essential to prevent challenges in early school years leading to lasting educational, employment, and economic disadvantages. The federal government must:

- Mandate training on speech, language, and hearing development in all federally funded Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs.
- Provide sustained federal funding to expand ECE training programs that integrate speech-language pathology and audiology expertise.
- Work with provinces and territories to establish national best practices for incorporating S-LPs, audiologists and CHAs into licensed daycare settings.
- Establish national guidelines for comprehensive Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs to strengthen early hearing detection and intervention.



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Who is SAC?

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) is the only national organization representing S-LPs, audiologists, and communication health assistants. Through advocacy, knowledge sharing, and professional support, we raise the profile of our professions and champion the needs of people with communication disorders. From early intervention and communication support for children to helping adults with balance or swallowing issues, SAC works to enhance Canadians' quality of life at every stage.