

CORE FUNCTIONS FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Department of Communicative Disorders

OVERVIEW

The Core Functions specific to Speech-Language Pathologists as recommended by the Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (2023) are established as the behavioral or cognitive functions an individual must be able to perform with or without accommodations for professionals entering the field of speech-language pathology. In order to acquire the knowledge and skills requisite to the practice of speech-language pathology to function in a broad variety of clinical situations, and to render a wide spectrum of patient care, individuals must be able to perform these core functions across the areas of: **communication, motor, intellectual-cognitive, sensory, interpersonal and cultural responsiveness**. Many of these skills can be learned and developed during the course of the graduate program through coursework and clinical experience. Other skills that are more inherent and should be present when a student begins the program. Students should consider these core functions when making informed decisions about applying to the program.

COMMUNICATION

Statements in this section acknowledge that speech-language pathologists must communicate in a way that is understood by their clients/patients and others. It is recognized that linguistic, paralinguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic variations are part of every culture, and accent, dialects, idiolects, and communication styles can differ from general American English expectations. Communication may occur in different modalities depending on the joint needs of involved parties and may be supported through various accommodations as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs. Some examples of these accommodations include augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, written displays, voice amplification, attendant-supported communication, oral translators, assistive listening devices, sign interpreters, and other non-verbal communication modes.

- Employ oral, written, auditory, and non-verbal communication at a level sufficient to meet academic and clinical competencies.

- Adapt communication style to effectively interact with colleagues, clients, patients, caregivers, and invested parties of diverse backgrounds in various modes such as in person, over the phone, and in electronic format.

MOTOR

Statements in this section acknowledge that clinical practice by speech-language pathologists involves a variety of tasks that require manipulation of items and environments. It is recognized that this may be accomplished through a variety of means, including, but not limited to, independent motor movement, assistive technology, attendant support, or other accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable to offer and appropriate to client/patient needs.

- Engage in physical activities at a level required to accurately implement classroom and clinical responsibilities (e.g., manipulating testing and therapeutic equipment and technology, client/patient equipment, and practice management technology) while retaining the integrity of the process.
- Respond in a manner that ensures the safety of clients and others.

INTELLECTUAL / COGNITIVE

Statements in this section acknowledge that speech-language pathologists must engage in critical thinking, reasoning, and comprehension and retention of information required in clinical practice. It is recognized that such skills may be fostered through a variety of means, including assistive technology and /or accommodations/modifications as deemed reasonable and appropriate to client/patient needs.

- Retain, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply auditory, written, and oral information at a level sufficient to meet curricular and clinical competencies.
- Employ informed critical thinking and ethical reasoning to formulate a differential diagnosis and create, implement, and adjust evaluation and treatment plans as appropriate for the client/patient's needs.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection and evaluation of one's existing knowledge and skills.
- Critically examine and apply evidence-based judgment in keeping with best practices for client/patient care.

SENSORY

Statements in this section acknowledge that speech-language pathologists use auditory, visual, tactile, and olfactory information to guide clinical practice. It is recognized that such information

may be accessed through a variety of means, including direct sensory perception and /or adaptive strategies. Some examples of these strategies include visual translation displays, text readers, assistive listening devices, and perceptual descriptions by clinical assistants.

- Access sensory information to differentiate functional and disordered auditory, oral, written, and visual communication.
- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate anatomical structures and diagnostic imaging findings.
- Access sensory information to correctly differentiate and discriminate text, numbers, tables, and graphs associated with diagnostic instruments and tests.

INTERPERSONAL

Statements in this section acknowledge that speech-language pathologists must interact with a diverse community of individuals in a manner that is safe, ethical, and supportive. It is recognized that personal interaction styles may vary by individuals and cultures and that good clinical practice honors such diversity while meeting this obligation.

- Display compassion, respect, and concern for others during all academic and clinical interactions.
- Adhere to all aspects of relevant professional codes of ethics, privacy, and information management policies.
- Take personal responsibility for maintaining physical and mental health at a level that ensures safe, respectful, and successful participation in didactic and clinical activities.

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Statements in this section acknowledge that speech-language pathologists have an obligation to practice in a manner responsive to individuals from different cultures, linguistic communities, social identities, beliefs, values, and worldviews. This includes people representing a variety of abilities, ages, cultures, dialects, disabilities, ethnicities, genders, gender identities or expressions, languages, national/regional origins, races, religions, sexes, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and lived experiences.

- Engage in ongoing learning about cultures and belief systems different from one's own and the impacts of these on healthcare and educational disparities to foster effective provision of services.
- Demonstrate the application of culturally responsive evidence-based decisions to guide clinical practice 5 This document should be considered a living document and therefore reviewed by CAPCSD at regular intervals to ensure that current terminology, practice, and ideas are reflected.

Office of Disability Services

The CODI Department is committed to assisting qualified students with disabilities through reasonable means and accommodations to complete the Master's degree and clinical qualifications in Speech-Language Pathology. Students who need accommodations to meet the core functions of speech-language pathology should contact the Office of Disability Services for UL Lafayette. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) at UL Lafayette is dedicated to ensuring nondiscrimination and equal access to all programs, services, and activities for qualified students with disabilities. Information about the Office of Disability Services is available to interested individuals at <https://disability.louisiana.edu/>

Council of Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (2023). A guide for future practitioners in audiology and speech-language pathology: Core functions.