

What can a speech pathologist do within their role?

Speech Pathologists are qualified Allied Health Practitioners trained to provide individualised assessments, develop intervention and enhancement plans and implement therapeutic programs for their consumers.



To find a Speech Pathologist in your area you can search the internet at:

- Healthdirect [or](#)
- Speech Pathology Australia
- Or a local community health centre or health service

It is always useful to ring and discuss to ensure you are making an appropriate referral.

Why do we need Speech Pathologists?

- For a wellness approach that involves looking for the reasons behind changing abilities, to acknowledge the concern and support the person to overcome issues rather than avoiding the concern or increasing services without exploring alternative options.
- Communication – the process of being able to understand and be understood – is something most of us take for granted. One in seven Australians has some form of communication difficulty.
- Speech Pathologists provide a broad range of services. They work with people who have difficulty communicating because of progressive neurological diseases, stroke, brain injuries, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, chronic disease, dementia and sensory impairments as well as other problems that can affect speech and language. People who experience difficulties swallowing food and drinking safely can also be helped by a Speech Pathologistⁱ.
- For example, consider if your consumers who have experienced a stroke or have muscular skeletal conditions (such as MS), may benefit from an assessment by a Speech Pathologist to support their ability to maintain their nutrition and hydration.

ⁱ Speech Pathology Australia, 30 June 2014 (website address above)

How can the HACC-PYP and/or CHSP team work with Speech Pathologists?

- All team members can benefit from understanding the role and skill base of the Speech Pathologist. The Speech Pathologist will report on their assessment and provide guidance on how to support the consumer/their carers.
- Training community support workers to assist the consumer with speech difficulties and prompting the consumer to do their speech exercises.
- Speech Pathologists can work alongside HACC-PYP and/or CHSP to implement specific support arrangements that will assist the consumer to remain safely at home and improve the consumer's quality of life. This assistance can take many forms – such as:
 - » Advising on the type of food/liquid and nutrition assistance that a consumer may require and training Community Support Workers to provide appropriate assistance.
- Working with respite providers to understand how best to assist the consumer to speak in group situations and ensure that the consumer is listened to appropriately.
- Supporting carers' to assist the consumer with reading or writing to maintain their independence in their normal activities.
- Speech Pathologists may also assist through secondary consultation (advice and suggestions) or by providing the types of assessment listed above to assist in the enhancement of consumer independence and quality of life.

The above are simple examples. There may be a number of other ways that a Speech Pathologist can be of assistance to the consumer, yourself and community support workers – just ask them.

Engaging Speech Pathologists in your practice can broaden your horizons in relation to consumer choice and service delivery techniques. They can provide training for family members/friends and HACC-PYP/CHSP team members in how best to work with and support the consumer. Speech Pathologists can assist your organisation to put person centred principles into practice and build wellness approaches into your care planning and service delivery models.



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