

# RED HEN SPEECH PATHOLOGY DISCONTINUATION OF SERVICES POLICY

## Introduction

Red Hen Speech Pathology is committed to providing ethical, professional, high-quality care and support to all our clients and staff. There may be instances where discontinuation of therapy services becomes necessary. This policy outlines the circumstances, procedures, and expectations regarding the discontinuation of therapy services to ensure clarity, consistency, and the continued well-being of clients.

## Scope

This policy applies to all therapy, consultation and supervision services provided by Red Hen Speech Pathology.

## Principles

- **Professionalism and integrity:** Red Hen Speech Pathology will act in an objective, transparent, fair and honest manner. Where cessation of services is necessary, we do so in an objective, respectful manner that considers clinical need, continuity of service, and the Code of Ethics. Clients have the right to understand why services are being discontinued, request a referral to another provider, and request a review of the decision to discontinue therapy services.
- **Quality and safety:** Red Hen Speech Pathology provides quality and competent professional services which follow evidence-based practice principles. We work within quality improvement and safety frameworks. We recognise our competence (scope of our education, training, and experience) and do not practice beyond these limits.
- **Beneficence:** Red Hen Speech Pathology is committed to improve the client's wellbeing. We provide services only where there is a clinical need and don't directly or indirectly encourage the indiscriminate or unnecessary use of our services.
- **Non-maleficence:** We act to prevent harm and do not knowingly cause harm.
- **Justice and fairness:** Our professional decision-making is fair and equitable. We consider the context and the needs of the person and the wider community.

## Policy

Therapy services may be discontinued under the following circumstances:

- **Client Request:** A client may request to discontinue therapy at any time, and the therapist will respect this decision. Clients are encouraged to provide feedback about the reason for their decision, however may discontinue services without providing a reason. A minimum 48hours notice is required for discontinuation or cancellation fees may apply.

- **Successful Completion of Goals:** If the client has successfully met the therapeutic goals set at the beginning of the treatment plan, and no further therapeutic intervention is necessary.
- **Improvement of Condition:** If the client's condition has significantly improved, and no further therapy is needed.
- **Non-compliance:** If a client consistently fails to attend scheduled sessions, does not follow the treatment plan, or is non-compliant with prescribed recommendations.
- **Therapist's Professional Judgment:** A therapist may determine that therapy is no longer appropriate for the client due to factors such as lack of progress, the emergence of new issues, or external factors affecting the client's ability to participate in therapy.
- **Scope of Practice:** Speech Pathologists work with a wide range of communication difficulties and are committed to life-long learning to maintain contemporary skills and knowledge. If the client presents with clinical needs that the clinician does not feel they are adequately skilled to address, services may be discontinued. For example, Red Hen Speech Pathology does not currently provide services to clients whose primary concern is fluency/stuttering.
- **Safety Concerns:** If there are concerns about the safety of the client or therapist (e.g., aggressive behavior, threats of harm, or other risk factors). This includes bullying and harassment of staff by the client, family or other stakeholders.
- **Change in Location:** If a client changes residence/school/workplace to a location that is outside the area serviced by Red Hen Speech Pathology or if the altered travel can not be accommodated within the therapist's schedule.
- **Scheduling Constraints:** If there is insufficient capacity to deliver the required intensity of supports, if no suitable appointment time is available, if the logistics of travel can not be accommodated, or if the frequency of intervention would be too low to achieve agreed outcomes.
- **Financial Matters:** If the client has outstanding invoices, is regularly late with payment of invoices, requires multiple reminders to pay invoices, or if there is any concern regarding potential fraudulent claims being made by the client/guardian.
- **Emergency Discontinuation:** In certain situations, therapy services may be discontinued immediately (e.g., if there is an immediate safety risk or a legal/ethical issue arises). In such cases, the therapist or clinician will inform the client of the discontinuation as soon as possible and document the circumstances.
- **Exceptional Circumstances:** If special circumstances arise (eg. unexpected illness of the therapist), the client may be notified and referred to another professional temporarily or permanently.

## Procedures

1. **Notification:** The client will be informed of the decision to discontinue therapy services in writing, and where possible, in person, with a clear explanation of the reason for the discontinuation. The notification may include information on alternative resources, referrals, or follow-up recommendations.

2. **Documentation:** The reason for discontinuation will be documented in the client's record. All interactions and decisions related to discontinuation will be recorded appropriately.
3. **Communication:** It is the responsibility of the client/guardian to inform relevant team members know that services have been discontinued however the therapist may choose to advise key stakeholders for whom they have previously been granted consent under the release of information.
4. **Transition Plan:** When agreed, a transition plan will be created in the event of discontinuation, which may include referrals to other providers, documentation of a summary report, home exercises, or recommendations for continued care. Fees may apply and invoices will require payment before release of any final reports or resources.
5. **Follow-Up:** If applicable, follow-up appointments or check-ins may be scheduled to ensure a smooth transition after therapy has been discontinued.

## Related policy and procedures

- RHSP Payment policy
- RHSP Cancellation Policy
- RHSP Complaint Management Policy
- RHSP Prioritisation Policy

## Related legislation, regulations and standards

Speech Pathology Australia Code of Ethics (2020)

### Approvals

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Director: Manda Dalton