

# RED HEN SPEECH PATHOLOGY COVID-19 POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## Introduction

As a mobile business without premises where clients are seen, Red Hen Speech Pathology is currently not required to complete a COVID-19 Safety Plan. However the implementation of COVID-19 policy and procedures will help ensure Red Hen Speech Pathology actively mitigates the risks of COVID-19 in line with best available health advice. The policy and procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary as health and government advice changes.

## Definitions

Covid-19 is an illness that is caused by a [coronavirus](#), which is transmitted by airborne droplets or contact with objects or surfaces contaminated by the causative virus. Covid-19 is characterized especially by fever, cough, loss of taste or smell, and shortness of breath and may progress to pneumonia and respiratory failure. However, the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 do vary depending on the variant and may appear to be similar to a cold.

## Scope

This policy will be implemented during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The procedures will apply to all Red Hen Speech Pathology staff and clients.

## Policy Statement

- Red Hen Speech Pathology will adhere to all guidelines and recommendations issued by the WA Dept of Health, WA Government, Federal Health authorities and/or Speech Pathology Australia to minimise risk of COVID-19 infection to staff, clients or their carers.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gloves, face masks and face shields in accordance with the relevant practice guidelines issued by the WA Dept of Health, Federal Health authorities and/or Speech Pathology Australia to minimise risk of infection to staff or clients.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will comply with the policies and procedures of any organisation on whose premises they conduct therapy, this includes but is not limited to schools, accommodation service providers, aged care providers, and employment organisations.

## Procedures

### Vaccination

- In accordance with the Residential Aged Care Facility Worker Access Directions which came into effect on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021, all staff of Red Hen Speech Pathology will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

- Furthermore, all staff will ensure that their booster dose is received within one month of becoming eligible in accordance with the WA Government Policy. As of January 4, 2022, the booster dose will be available 4 months after the second dose.
- A vaccination register will be kept and proof of vaccination will be provided to any organisations or families that wish to see proof of vaccination.

### Contact Register

- The names of all people present during the appointment will be recorded in accordance with WA Government Contact Register requirements. The names of all people in attendance during appointments will be recorded in session notes. These can then be recalled to create a contact register if required.
- If a Safe WA QR code is available at the therapy location (eg. school, residential accommodation, community location such as café), the Speech Pathologist will check-in upon arrival using the SafeWA app.

### Physical Distancing

- The Speech Pathologist will ensure that minimum physical distancing will be maintained in accordance with current guidelines and directives.
- Therapy and assessment is conducted as individual sessions (no group therapy).
- Family members who are not participating in the therapy session may be at home but should remain in other rooms.
- Therapy appointments within private residences will be conducted within large living spaces such as lounge rooms/dining rooms which enable a minimum space allowance in accordance with WA Health guidelines.
- Therapy conducted within schools will be conducted in empty classrooms or meeting room spaces that all exceed the minimum space requirement, whenever possible.

### Hygiene

- Alcohol based sanitizer is kept in the vehicle and work bag at all times.
- Hands are sanitized before entering a premises and upon departure. Hands will be sanitised between clients. Hands may also be sanitized during a session if there is contact with a client, shared materials or therapist face.
- All clients of Red Hen Speech Pathology will be encouraged to use hand sanitiser at the commencement and end of each appointment.
- All materials are sanitized following appointments. Soft surfaces or paper resources are sanitized using Glen 20 aerosol spray. Hard surfaces are sanitized using antibacterial wipes or Glen 20 aerosol spray.
- Where possible, assessments and intervention are conducted using an iPad rather than paper-based assessments due to ease of cleaning.
- Plastic sheets or pockets may be used to protect paper resources and enable easier cleaning.
- Consumption of food is to be avoided during therapy appointments unless required for dysphagia assessment or intervention.
- Disposable gloves are used when conducting dysphagia or voice assessments that require client contact.
- Face masks are worn in accordance with current government directives.

- Face shields are available for use in accordance with government directives/Speech Pathology Australia practice guidelines.

When directed by health authorities that wearing of face masks is mandatory:

- **Masks will be mandatory** for children over the age of 12 and all adults. This includes when receiving services at school and in the community. People who have a physical or mental illness, condition or disability which makes wearing a face covering unsuitable are not required to wear a mask (EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT 2005 (WA) Section 72A FACE COVERING DIRECTIONS).
- All therapists will be required to wear masks when providing services except in the below instances (EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT 2005 (WA) Section 72A FACE COVERING DIRECTIONS (Paragraph 4). The relevant exceptions specified are as follows:
  - (a) the person is communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing and visibility of the mouth is essential for communication;
  - (c) the nature of a person's work or the activity that they are engaging in means that clear enunciation or visibility of the mouth is essential;
- Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will comply with any client/carer request that they continue to wear their face mask throughout the appointment (even if it is not mandatory at the time or under the specific conditions of the appointment).

## Training and Education

Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will complete the relevant Covid-19 training as it becomes available or is updated.

## Response Planning

### *Alternative models of service*

- Telehealth services will be offered to clients as an alternative to face-to-face appointments during any lockdown announced by the WA Government that restricts face-to-face appointments.
- Telehealth services may be appropriate on an ongoing basis for some clients who may be vulnerable to infection, unwell or self-isolating. This will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

### *Responding to symptoms of illness*

- Clients/Carers are requested to cancel face-to-face appointments if the client, carer or another family member/resident of the household is unwell.
- If Red Hen Speech Pathology staff are concerned that the client or any person present during an appointment is unwell with a fever, cold, flu or Covid-19 like symptoms, the appointment may be terminated.
- If Red Hen Speech Pathology staff experience any symptoms of cold, flu or Covid-19 (cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion, tiredness, or loss of smell or taste) scheduled appointments will be cancelled until a negative

Covid-19 test result has been received, symptoms cease and medical advice has been sought if appropriate.

- Clients/Carers are requested to cancel face-to-face appointments if the client, carer or another family member/resident of the household is awaiting the result of a Covid-19 test or has had contact with a positive Covid-19 case. These can be rescheduled following completion of any isolation/quarantine as required by WA Health.

### *Potential Exposure*

- If the client, carer or another family member/resident of the household has returned from overseas or interstate in the last 14 days, relevant quarantine/isolation/testing directives of the WA Government will be enforced.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will comply with all requests from contact tracers to provide a contact register for any applicable dates in the event of a positive Covid-19 test relating to staff, clients, carers or contacts.
- In the event that a Red Hen Speech Pathology staff member is exposed to Covid-19, the *Work Permissions and Restrictions Framework for Workers in Health Care Settings* will be applied in consultation with relevant authorities.

### *Other*

- The cancellation fee may be waived at the discretion of Red Hen Speech Pathology, if an appointment is cancelled due to Covid-19 related restrictions or ill health during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Red Hen Speech Pathology staff will comply with all relevant directives from the WA Government or WA Health Dept to undertake self-isolation or quarantine.
- In the event that Perth is placed under restrictions, Red Hen Speech Pathology will use the Speech Pathology Australia Risk Assessment Tool (SPA-RAT) to assess the risk factors in relation to service provision.

## **Communication with Clients/Carers regarding Procedures**

Red Hen Speech Pathology will ensure that guidelines which impact on service delivery will be communicated to all clients in a timely and accessible manner.

## **Related legislation, regulations, and standards**

Australian Government – Dept of Health

[Work permissions and restrictions framework for workers in health care settings](#)

WA Government

[COVID-19 coronavirus \(www.wa.gov.au\)](#)

[COVID-19 coronavirus: Mandatory vaccination \(www.wa.gov.au\)](#)

Speech Pathology Australia

[COVID-19 \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](#)

[Infection Prevention and Control Guideline \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](#)

[Guidance for Service Delivery \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](#)

[Risk Assessment Tool \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](#)

## Approvals

Date of approval: [26/12/21]

Date of review due: [26/12/22]

Director: Manda Hollins