

Position Statement Regarding Preschool Speech and Language and Children's Rehabilitation Services Guidelines, August 2023

The Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario District School Boards serves as an information and educational resource to stakeholders in Ontario about best practices in delivering speech-language pathology services in District School Boards. We continue to recommend that a full range of high quality, evidence-based services to meet both the speech and language needs of school-age children be delivered in schools, by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), under the direction of District School Boards and the Ministry of Education and funded as a provincial priority.

Recently, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) has provided guidelines regarding Preschool Speech and Language Services (PSL) and Children's Rehabilitation Guidelines. ACSLP would like to highlight consideration for leaders in District School Boards as these guidelines are reviewed, given that these are guidelines from the MCCSS and not the Ministry of Education.

School Board SLPs are embedded in school communities and, therefore, are able to provide support to schools and classrooms at all tier levels. They are in a unique position of understanding the specific needs of each student and school community as well as the broader requirements of the Ministry of Education curriculum and its academic expectations. Many school board SLP provide support in areas beyond those outlined in the MCCSS Guidelines (e.g. AAC, social communication, literacy).

School Board SLPs value collaborating with PSL/CTCs to provide seamless transition from PSL/CTC SLPs to the School Board SLPs, and believe that this collaboration is important for optimizing student success from the time students enter school. In this scenario, School Board SLPs can transition the support of students from the medical model provided by PSL/CTC to a model that considers the child from their individual intervention needs as well as their communication and social functioning as part of the school community.

School board SLPs offer services that are equitable and accessible given that all children and youth are entitled to a meaningful education. Not all families are able to access preschool services, and as such, prioritizing school supports based on access to preschool services may reinforce systemic barriers for equity deserving groups. As such, the transition to school services needs to be viewed through an equity lens as decisions are made.

As a document, the MCCSS Guidelines indicate that it does not provide direction to employees or programming funded through the Ministry of Education including District School Boards; rather, this is provided through PPM 81 & PPM 149. Furthermore, the document does not apply to services delivered through the Ontario Autism Program.

Collaboration between community agencies requires a deep understanding of what each agency does and co-creation of service delivery that both complements and enhances the work of each agency. Collaborative decisions need to be evidence informed and data driven by region with a focus on timely access to services for students.