

## **FAQs from SPA members**

### **Private Practitioners as Clinical Educators**

Please find below responses to questions Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) members frequently ask about private practitioners as clinical educators.

Members are also encouraged to read SPA's [Position Statement Clinical Education \(2005\)](#). The importance and value for the speech pathology profession and the [Competency-Based Occupational Standards \(CBOS\), 2011](#) for Speech Pathologists document which sets out the minimum skills, knowledge base and professional standards required for entry-level practice in speech pathology in Australia.

This information is to be used as a guide only and is not a substitute for legal advice. If you require specific advice, you should speak to a lawyer. For insurance related questions please contact your insurer and please note that: *Any circumstances that you notify to the insurer, which could become a claim, will be assessed by the insurer. Depending on those circumstances, your claim may or may not be covered under the policy. As with all insurance policies, terms and conditions apply to the cover provided under the policy.*

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact SPA by phoning 03 9642 4899 or 1300 368 835 or emailing [office@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au](mailto:office@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)

#### **I have been asked by a university to supervise speech pathology students; am I allowed to do this?**

Yes. There are no restrictions on private practitioners supervising students. This is a personal decision based on whether you feel you have sufficient knowledge and appropriate experience, the necessary time and an adequate number of clients who have agreed to be seen by students.

#### **But, are students allowed to work with my clients?**

In most circumstances it is permissible for your clients to be seen by students providing explicit permission has been provided by the client or the parent/guardian (see below). Care must be taken to match the student to the client and to provide adequate guidance. Restrictions apply if your client is claiming a private health fund rebate or Medicare rebate (see below).

#### **Are there a minimum number of years I should have been practising before I supervise students?**

No, it is up to the supervisor to decide to whether they feel they have acquired sufficient knowledge and experience to supervise a student. This may also depend on the level of supervision and mentoring provided to newer graduate supervisors and the university requirements.

#### **Do I need to obtain the client's permission to be seen by a student?**

Yes, it is essential that you gain the client's written permission and fully inform them of how the student will be involved in their therapy program. They also need to be informed that they can request to discontinue working with the student at any time and who they need to inform if they wish to discontinue their involvement with the student. It is advisable to provide the client with written information about the student placement including the specific supervision and clinical guidance provided to the student.



## **Are there any restrictions related to third party funding arrangements?**

Yes, as mentioned above, restrictions do apply and are detailed below:

- For clients to be able to claim a Private health fund rebate, the treating speech pathologist must be registered with Medicare. Therefore, the client cannot claim a rebate from their private health fund if a student works with the client.
- Medicare: Chronic Disease Management program - the supervising clinician (presuming they have a Medicare provider number) must work one on one with the client for at least 20 minutes of the session for the client to be eligible to claim a rebate. The student can then work with the client, under supervision, for the remaining part of the session.
- If you do not work one on one with client for this specified time and instead supervise the student for the whole session you will not meet the legislative requirements of the CDM program.
- Medicare: Helping Children with Autism and Better Start Medicare items – the supervising clinician (presuming they have a Medicare provider number) must work one on one with the client for at least 30 minutes of the session for the client to be eligible to claim a rebate. The student can then work with the client, under supervision, for the remaining part of the session.
- If you do not work one on one with client for this specified time and instead supervise the student for the whole session you will not meet the legislative requirements of the HCWA and Better Start programs.
- FaHCSIA early intervention funding – students may provide services to HCWA and Better Start clients. Members are advised to refer to the Operational Guidelines for each program for specific requirements regarding student supervision: [HCWA Operational Guidelines, July 2012](#) and the [Better Start Operational Guidelines \(December 2012\)](#)

If the client has access to other types of funding the speech pathologist should confirm with the funding provider whether the student can work with the client and if so, how much direct intervention by the clinician and direct supervision of the student is required.

## **Should I charge less for the sessions provided by the student?**

This is a business decision you will need to make, and will be based on factors such as is the session the same length as the typical session and does the standard of the service provided by the student under supervision meet the standard usually provided to the client.

## **Am I liable for the treatment provided by the student under my supervision?**

Yes. As a supervisor you are responsible for any actions taken by the student while under your supervision. You should ensure the amount of supervision provided is appropriate to the needs of the client and for the student's experience and skills as well as meeting the expectations of the University program.

## **Does my professional indemnity insurance cover me if I supervise a student?**

Yes. The policy wording provides cover for professional indemnity claims arising from a person for whom you are vicariously liable. Please contact your insurer for more specific information about your individual policy.

## **Does my public liability insurance cover the student as well?**

Given the student is not the policy holder, they are not covered for their direct liability. However, the policy covers you for public liability associated with your Healthcare Practice. Therefore, if the student is under your supervision as part of your Healthcare Practice when a public liability incident occurs, then you may be vicariously liable. Please contact your insurer for clarification regarding this matter.

### **Does the student need to have their own insurance?**

Yes. The University usually provides insurance which covers students on clinical placements. It is advisable to confirm this with the university prior to agreeing to supervise the student as to the arrangements regarding insurance and who you need to contact if you have additional queries.

### **Do I need to co-sign all notes written by the student and what about reports written by the student?**

This is your decision to make unless it's a specified requirement of the university or a law. Co-signing has negative and positive aspects to it. If you co-sign every document the student produces then you are implying it has been checked by you and the information contained within is correct. If the student is under your supervision then almost anything they do wrong can fall back on you, regardless of whether you co-sign any documents they produce. Co-signing is a form of proof for you that you checked and approved the document. There is no insurance requirement to co-sign documents produced by the student.

### **I haven't ever supervised students do I need to complete any training?**

The university placing the student will be able to advise you as to what training or experience you need prior to supervising a student.

### **Will I be paid to supervise a student(s)?**

Generally no, however, this is something that you would need to negotiate with the University who is placing the student.

### **Are Working With Children Checks and / or Police Checks required for students?**

Yes. The University requires students undergo a police check prior to commencing clinical placements.

### **What are my responsibilities regarding client confidentiality and privacy?**

It is expected that the student has undertaken some training regarding confidentiality and privacy prior to commencing their placement, however as part of your induction for the student it is paramount that you discuss confidentiality and privacy matters and provide the student with a copy of your Privacy Policy.

### **My employer doesn't wish me to supervise students how do I convince them of the benefits of supervision?**

There is no doubt that there can be many barriers to supervising a student including reluctant managers or employers. There are, however, many benefits to be gained from supervising students and following is a list reasons to supervise a student produced by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA):

[http://www.govst.edu/uploadedFiles/chhs/Departments/DCD/MHS\\_CD/Top%20ten%20reasons%20to%20supervise%208-26-09.pdf](http://www.govst.edu/uploadedFiles/chhs/Departments/DCD/MHS_CD/Top%20ten%20reasons%20to%20supervise%208-26-09.pdf)

### Top Ten Reasons to Supervise a Student

1. Develop and recruit future employees.
2. Stay current—learn what students are learning.
3. Share your expertise with future SLPs.
4. Establish a relationship with university programs.
5. Teach future SLPs to advocate for SLP services.
6. Introduce students to interdisciplinary teaming.
7. Feel good about giving back to the profession.
8. Develop your mentoring and supervisory skills.
9. Enhance your clinical skills by teaching someone else.
10. Leave a legacy.

### How do I find out more information about supervising students?

You can contact your local university to enquire as to whether they are looking for clinical educators. Contact details for *Clinical Education Enquiries* for each university are listed on the [University Courses](#) page on SPA's website.

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