



Alberta College of  
Speech-Language Pathologists  
and Audiologists

*Hear. Speak. Connect.*

*Advisory Statement*

# Use of the Protected Title **“Doctor” or “Dr.”** When Providing a Health Service

June 2018

## Use of the Protected Title “Doctor” or “Dr.” When Providing a Health Service

*An ACSLPA Advisory Statement addresses the legislated obligations that apply to speech-language pathologists and/or audiologists. Advisory statements inform regulated members about legislation, provide suggestions for compliance, and direct members to relevant resources.*

### Restrictions on Use of the Title “Doctor” or “Dr.” When Providing a Health Service

In compliance with Section 128 (7) of Alberta’s *Health Professions Act (HPA)* and Section 18 (3) of the *Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Profession Regulation*, only regulated speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and audiologists with doctoral degrees **from programs approved by ACSLPA Council**, may use the protected title “Doctor” or “Dr.” alone or in combination with other words in connection with providing a health service.

*Health service* is defined in the *HPA* as “a service provided to people (i) to protect, promote or maintain their health, (ii) to prevent illness, (iii) to diagnose, treat or rehabilitate, or (iv) to take care of the health needs of the ill, disabled, injured, or dying”.

It is important that regulated members not mislead the public as to their qualifications. To this end, they are responsible for representing their academic and professional qualifications clearly and accurately.

Authorized members should only use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” in compliance with this position statement document. Any other use of the title may be a violation of the HPA.

### Use of the Title “Doctor” or “Dr.” in Teaching, Research, and Administration

Regulated members of ACSLPA with doctoral degrees may use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” alone or in combination with other words in teaching, research or administration settings **without prior authorization by the College** (as per section 128 of the HPA).

## Mandatory Authorization

Regulated SLPs and audiologists must make written application to the College and must obtain written approval from the College prior to using the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” when providing a health service.

Interested individuals must **first** be registered with the College prior to applying for use of the title doctor authorization.

Revised authorization criteria to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” alone or in combination with other words when providing a health service were approved by ACSLPA Council on March 24, 2018.

Copies of the revised authorization criteria for speech-language pathologists and for audiologists are available on the ACSLPA website or by contacting the ACSLPA office directly.

## Regulated Members Authorized to Use Title Doctor Prior to March 2018

ACSLPA’s original *Authorization Criteria for Use of the Title Doctor When Providing a Health Service* date back to 2005. Standards on which the original criteria were developed have changed; the revised authorization criteria referred to in this position statement are a reflection of those changes. **Individuals who were authorized to use the title doctor based on the original 2005 criteria will continue to be authorized to use the title going forward.**

## Key Principles/Values

ACSLPA outlines the following principles in relation to use of the protected title “Doctor” or “Dr.” alone or in combination with other words by an individual holding a doctoral degree in Speech-Language Pathology or Audiology in connection with providing a health service:

- Regulated members, regardless of whether they are master’s trained, doctoral trained, or hold a degree that is considered substantially equivalent in that it meets entry to practice requirements, are all qualified to provide speech-language pathology or audiology services to the public within the limits of their individual competence. Authorization by ACSLPA to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” is not an endorsement by the college of level of competence in the profession, but it is a recognition of that individuals’ earned academic credential.
- All applicants for registration with ACSLPA, regardless of the academic credential obtained, must meet the minimum entry-to-practice requirements, as outlined in ACSLPA’s *Registration Standards and Guidelines*.

## Accepted Use of Title “Doctor” or “Dr.” for Authorized Individuals

As noted in Schedule 28 (2) of the *HPA*, a regulated member of ACSLPA may, in accordance with the regulations, use any of the following titles, abbreviations and initials:

- (a) Speech-language pathologist;
- (b) Speech therapist;
- (c) Speech pathologist;
- (d) Audiologist;
- (e) SLP;
- (f) R.SLP;
- (g) Aud;
- (h) R.Aud

Any of the above noted titles, abbreviations and initials may be used alone or in combination for the purposes of sharing information regarding title and credentials. **Several (but not all)** of these protected titles have been incorporated into the illustrative examples provided below.

## Face-to-Face Interactions

For the purpose of face-to-face interactions, regulated SLPs and audiologists who have been approved to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” in connection with providing a health service should state their profession at the same time as they use “Dr.”, as in the following examples:

“Hello, I am Dr. Smith, Audiologist.”  
“I am Dr. Smith, Speech-Language Pathologist.”

Similarly, those referring to **someone else** should use the individual’s health profession title:

“You will be seeing Dr. Smith, Registered Audiologist”.

Regulated members who have been granted authorization are responsible for sharing this information with staff or colleagues who may be interfacing verbally with clients or members of the public on their behalf.

## Written Correspondence

In written correspondence, regulated SLPs and audiologists who have been approved to use the protected title “Doctor” or “Dr.” in connection with providing a health service should state their profession at the same time as they use “Dr.”, as in the following examples:

For a clinical doctorate of Audiology:

Dr. Jane Smith, AuD., R.Aud  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Doctor of Audiology, R.Aud  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, AuD, Audiologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Audiologist

For a clinical doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology:

Dr. Jane Smith, CScD., or DSLP., or SLPD., R.SLP  
OR  
Jane Smith, DSLP, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Doctor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, R.SLP  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Speech-Language Pathologist

For other approved doctoral degrees:

Dr. Jane Smith, PhD, R.Aud  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, PhD, Audiologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, PhD, R.SLP  
OR  
Jane Smith, Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, Speech-Language Pathologist

In any of the above examples, it is also acceptable to state one’s name and credentials followed by one’s title. For example:

Dr. Jane Smith, AuD, R.Aud  
Doctor of Audiology, Registered Audiologist  
OR  
Dr. Jane Smith, PhD, R.SLP  
Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist

## Electronic Communications and Social Media

Electronic communications, including but not limited to email addresses, domain names, and twitter handles should follow the same rule of thumb as outlined for face-to-face and written correspondence; namely, title “Doctor” or “Dr.”, if used, should be accompanied by the individual’s name and professional designation.

### Accepted Use of Title “**Doctor**” or “**Dr.**” for Unauthorized Individuals

When an individual possesses a doctoral degree but has not been authorized by ACSLPA to use the title “Doctor” or “Dr.” when providing a health service, and the member chooses to include the doctoral degree as part of their written credentials, they should represent those credentials in the following manner:

Jane Smith, MSc, PhD in Neuroscience\*, R.Aud  
OR  
Jane Smith, MSc, PhD in Neuroscience\*, Registered Audiologist  
OR  
Jane Smith, MSc, PhD in Education\*, R.SLP  
OR  
Jane Smith, MSc, PhD in Education\*, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist

\*The program must be identified as *PhD in [Academic Field]*.

Because the doctoral degree in these cases is not in the professional field (i.e., in speech-language pathology or audiology), it is important that the professional degree by which their professional registration was obtained (i.e., in this case, the “MSc”) be included as part of the written credential.