

THE SPEECH & CENTRE

ABN: 66 617 749 014

COVID-19 policy

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Lead Author: Nadine Bakka- Director

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Record of Procedure Review

REVIEW DATE	PERSON CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

Triggers for Procedure Review (tick all that apply)

- Standard review is timetabled.
- A gap has been identified
- Additional knowledge or information has become available to supplement the policy.
- External factors
- Policy is no longer relevant/current due to changes in external operating environment.
- There are changes to laws, regulations, terminology and/or government policy.
- Internal / organisational factors
- A serious or critical incident has occurred, requiring an urgent review.
- A near miss has occurred, requiring a review to prevent a serious/critical incident in the future
- Other (please specify).

1. Purpose and Scope

To maintain the health and wellbeing of employees, clients and stakeholders, and to ensure business operations continue to provide the highest quality service provision to our community. The Speech & OT Centre will do its part to minimize the spread of any contagious illness and slow community spread of the COVID 19 virus.

The Speech & OT Centre is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all employees, clients and stakeholders. This policy sets out the steps that the Practice is taking in order to respond to clients and staff wellbeing, and to minimize the risk of spreading any suspected contagious illness, and the expectations that are placed upon employees and clients, in order to take every precaution to not spread illness or a possible case of COVID 19.

2. Definitions

Nil definitions.

3. Policy Implementation

All staff are made aware of this policy at an Orientation training day. For all new staff, this Orientation occurs at the commencement of employment. At Orientation, all staff are provided with policies to read, and encouraged to ask any questions they may have. This policy applies to all staff. As this policy was introduced after Orientation day, staff were made aware of this policy at the next staff development day, as this had occurred within a timely manner. Had this not happened, the policy would have been emailed to staff, who would've then needed to respond as confirmation of having read and understood the policy.

This policy and supporting documents are reviewed as part of the organisation's continuous quality improvement, and changes to the policy will be communicated to staff, who are given the opportunity to review the policy. At any point, if staff wish to review their understanding of the policies and procedures, they can access them online.

4. Policy Detail

Infection Control Measures:

We strongly encourage all employees and clients to follow guidelines from the NSW Health Department on infection control, both whilst at work, and in their daily lives (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au>). This includes:

- frequently cleaning their hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- when coughing and sneezing, covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue, throwing this tissue away immediately and washing their hands; and
- Maintaining clean surfaces and equipment.
- Avoiding close contact with anyone who has exhibited any symptoms such as; fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, or any influenza-like symptoms.
- Maintain appropriate physical distancing of 1.5 meters, and 4 meters of space per person. If 1.5 meters distancing is not possible, the clinician will wear an appropriate and approved face mask.
- Appropriate task modifications may be considered, such as use of barriers, or other modifications to reduce transmission risks.

Other recommended health precautions are available on the Federal and State Government respective Department of Health websites and phone hotlines.

Health Screening:

- All employees are required to do a self-assessment prior attending work, providing any in person consults, to ensuring they are not exhibiting any COVID 19 symptoms.
- All in person consults will require the clinician to undertake a risk assessment of the client, and any accompanying individuals to determine if it is appropriate to proceed and provide services.

If you develop symptoms:

If you begin to display symptoms of the virus, or have had to take simple medications (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) as they can mask the symptoms, it is important that you stay away from all practice locations. You must follow government guidance to find out what to do next, which may involve internet and phone services.

Any clients that have symptoms are required to notify the practice asap and cancel their appointment. Any clients or accompanying individuals that are assessed on presenting for their appointment with any symptoms will be required to cancel their appointment.

Any employees that develop symptoms are not permitted to attend work, and must contact the Director immediately. If any employee develops symptoms whilst at work, they must leave the premises and contact the Director immediately.

If you have any symptoms, or suspect you may have COVID-19 - see your nearest emergency hospital for testing, or call your local GP as many pathologists are now able to test for COVID-19.

If you are unaware of the symptoms and would like further information.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/symptoms-and-testing>

What if a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19?

If a staff member contracts the COVID-19 virus, you should take and follow medical advice. An employee is required to produce a medical certificate for illness; however, we appreciate that you are not likely to be in a position to obtain a medical certificate in usual timescales, therefore you should provide it as soon as is reasonably practicable. During your absence, The Speech & OT leave policy and personal leave rules will apply in accordance with our contractual and award requirements.

- Notify the Director.
- Follow all medical advice to recover from your infection as soon as possible.
- Speech & OT sites where an infection was confirmed will be closed as prescribed by health authorities.
- The Speech & OT sites where an infection was confirmed, will undergo comprehensive health certified cleaning of the entire premises.
- An employee can only return to work when they have been formally released by the local public health unit or their treating clinician, and written evidence can be provided.

Employees in accordance with the Health Professional and Support Services Award 2020 can access up to 2 weeks' unpaid pandemic leave (or more by agreement with

The Speech & OT Centre) if they are prevented from working:

- as a result of being required to self-isolate by government or medical authorities, or acting on the advice of a medical practitioner; or
- by measures taken by government or medical authorities in response to the pandemic (for example, an enforceable government direction restricting non-essential businesses).

The leave is available in full immediately to full-time, part-time and casual employees and it does not accrue.

Employees don't have to use all their paid leave before accessing unpaid pandemic leave.

What if a Family Member or Household Member is diagnosed with COVID-19?

- Notify the Director.
- You are to self-isolate or take relevant leave (including Pandemic Leave) as discussed with the Director;
- You should monitor yourself for symptoms for 14 days and take your temperature twice a day; and
- If you develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) you should stay at home and self-isolate. You should also telephone your healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of your symptoms. You may be asked to go to your nearest hospital to be tested.

Periods of self-isolation:

The government can direct individuals to self-isolate for the following reasons;

- is a close contact of another person with COVID-19
- has visited or travelled from Victoria
- is in home quarantine due to overseas travel
- has travelled to Lord Howe Island
- has been advised by the Public Health Unit to remain in isolation

Even if you have had a COVID 19 test, which is negative, you must continue to follow the relevant guidelines for self-isolation and remain in isolation for 14 full days.

The Director will keep in contact with you during this period. Where feasible, we may consider whether you can work from home during this period, or whether we can agree a period of paid annual leave with you. Where no other agreement is made, you will be deemed to be on unpaid pandemic leave during this time.

If you do have symptoms or begin to feel unwell and develop a fever or shortness of breath, a cough or respiratory illness, while self-isolating, you should call the dedicated hotline on 1800 020 080 for advice. This number is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In this situation, you will be treated as being on personal leave.

Sending employees home/requiring employees not to attend work:

If The Speech & OT Centre are concerned that you may have been exposed to the virus, even though you are not displaying symptoms, we may take the decision to send you home/require you not to attend the office. This may occur if, for example, you inform us that you have been in close contact with someone else who has, or may have, the virus. You will be expected to work from home during this period with no client contact.

If, during this period of isolation, you develop symptoms, you should follow government guidance on what to do next, which may include using internet or telephone services, and also follow our normal sickness reporting procedures. You will then be treated as being on a period of sickness absence should you have a positive diagnosis.

Attendance at work

Unless you have followed our usual reporting procedures in relation to personal leave, or are in self-isolation following government guidance, you are expected to attend work as normal.

Working from another location

It may be necessary for us to require you to work from an alternative work location if, for example, instructions from a third party mean that entry into our current workplace is not permitted. Your flexibility in this regard will be expected, however, all instructions of this nature will be reasonable.

The Speech & OT Centre will consider, as part of its general approach to maintaining normal business operations, whether employees are to work from home. Obviously, this will not be possible in every case due to the nature of individual roles. However, we will assess the viability of this option, taking into consideration any equipment needed, at the relevant time and, as a result, you may be required to work from home for a temporary period. Employees should not assume that they will be permitted to work from home and advance authorisation will be needed in every case.

Employee Travel Plans and Quarantine

The Speech & OT Centre accepts that some of its employees will have plans to travel in the near future, including pre-booked and paid for holidays. Certain countries have been identified as having been severely affected by the virus and we would therefore ask that employees consider, for their health reasons, whether travelling to these areas is the best thing to do. If a decision is made to travel, we ask that employees let the Director know of travel plans, so that their return can be managed appropriately.

We also ask all employees to keep themselves up to date with government guidance and bear in mind that this guidance can change on a daily basis.

If you would like to cancel any pre-booked annual leave, you should discuss this with the Director.

COVID Safe Plan

The Speech & OT Centre will maintain a COVID Safe Plan as recommended by the NSW Government and Speech Pathology Australia. This plan will be updated as required, based on government direction or recommendations.

5. References

All legislation and documents related to these policies and procedures can be found in the Appendix List.

- The Speech and OT COVID Safe Plan
- The Speech and OT Centre Leave Policy
- The Speech and OT Centre Work Health Safety Policy
- The Speech and OT Centre Infection Control Policy
- The Speech and OT Client Cancellation Policy