

IRISH ASSOCIATION OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
THERAPISTS



Code of Ethics

Revised 2006

(Previous Codes 1981, 1993 and 2004)

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CODE OF ETHICS FOR SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPISTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF IASLT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Members of the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists must maintain a high standard of ethical and professional conduct in the discharge of their duties. They must comply with the code of ethics as defined by the Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists Code. This Code of Ethics aims to provide the basis for the proper exercise of the profession of Speech and Language Therapy. At all times the primary professional obligation for all Speech and Language Therapists is the well-being of their clients.

The code serves as a guide to making ethical decisions by highlighting the obligations placed on speech and language therapists.

Members must be aware of the ethical practices and policies of the particular organisation in which the speech and language therapy service is provided.

1.2 Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics has been published by the Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists.

The code is a general guide to assist members in providing and maintaining proper standards of professional conduct.

1.3 Definition of terms

'Member' means an individual member of IASLT

'Client' means a person to whom a member renders a professional service

2.0 Personal Responsibility

2.1 Qualification

A member must possess appropriate professional qualifications as recognised by the professional body.

2.2 Continuing Professional Development

A member must maintain and advance their professional knowledge and keep up with technical and clinical progress throughout their careers in order to offer clients the best treatment available. Involvement in continuing professional development (CPD) is a fundamental requirement for membership of IASLT.

A member must seek support and formal supervision within their employing organisation.

2.3 Quality of Service

A member must offer the best possible treatment to clients and avoid exceeding their clinical competence, referring to other professionals when necessary to ensure that a high quality of service is provided.

2.4 Respect for Client

A member must respect the social, cultural, moral and legal norms of the clients with whom they are working and refrain from any action which may discredit her/him or the profession.

2.5 Personal Health

A member must limit or interrupt professional activities where temporary impairment of professional competence may have damaging consequences for the client or the profession.

3.0 Professional Conduct

3.1 Maintain Standards

A member must uphold the dignity of the profession and adhere to the profession's self imposed standards.

3.2 Personal Gain

A member must not be influenced by professional advancement and financial interests in decisions relating to intervention or treatment. A member must not accept gifts or any financial inducements that might influence professional judgements, during treatment or in onward referral.

Speech and Language Therapists who are involved in the promotion and development of materials, books or instruments for

communication and eating, drinking and swallowing disorders, must present them in a professional and objective manner and not put personal gain above professional responsibility

3.3 Therapeutic Intervention

A member must not guarantee the effectiveness of any therapeutic procedure directly or by implication but can make reasonable prognoses where appropriate.

4.0 Responsibility towards Clients

4.1 Client Welfare

A member has a primary responsibility for the welfare of their clients. A member has a duty of care to clients whom they accept for intervention and each client must have a clearly recorded assessment of need and objectives of treatment.

A member must ensure that the services are client centred and needs led. A member must respect the autonomy of each client and where a client is unable to express their autonomy, the member may accept an individual/carer to act as advocate.

4.2 Equitable Service Delivery

A member must not discriminate on the grounds of social standing, race, religion, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age in the delivery of professional services in accordance with the Equality Laws.

In certain circumstances, where it is not possible for the member to deliver treatment in the language of the client, appropriate measures should be undertaken to ensure the effectiveness of therapy.

4.3 Personal Relationships

A member must not enter into a personal relationship with clients.

4.4 Efficacy of Intervention

A member must evaluate the effectiveness of intervention and products recommended/prescribed and provide services only when benefit can reasonably be expected. The member may terminate the therapeutic relationship in consultation with the client when it is evident that the client is not gaining from the intervention or when optimum gain has been achieved.

4.5 Professional Fees

Where relevant, fees must be agreed upon in advance of commencement of treatment.

4.6 Confidentiality

A member must maintain strict professional confidentiality, not revealing any professional or personal information about identified others acquired in the course of clinical and/or non-clinical duties, except in the following cases;

- a) If there is a valid written consent by the client, authorised relative or legal adviser.
- b) If it is necessary to protect the welfare of the client or of the community.
- c) When required by law.
- d) In accordance with the Freedom of Information Laws (1997).

4.7 Record Keeping

A member must maintain comprehensive, contemporaneous, accurate and up to date records of all professional activities. The details will include the nature, extent, duration and outcome of intervention in line with best practice and in keeping with the Freedom of Information Laws. The member must ensure that it is understood that information is imparted in strict professional confidence and sharing of information must be with the consent of the client /legal carer except where the law dictates otherwise.

4.8 Equipment

Equipment used must be up to date and standardised assessment tools used should reflect the current normative data.

5.0 Responsibilities to Colleagues, Students and Support Staff

5.1 Supervision and Education

A member must facilitate the development and education of students.

A member must not allow treatment to be carried out by supportive personnel or students without:

- providing them with adequate supervision;
- assuming full responsibility and,
- gaining prior consent from client.

5.2 Professional Collaboration

A member must share information, knowledge and skills with fellow professionals, students and support staff as appropriate.

A member may liaise with other professionals as appropriate for the purposes of providing the best service to the client unless it is contrary to the wishes of the client.

5.3 Professional Respect

A member must not disparage a colleague in any way which could be deemed harmful to the individual personally or to their professional standing.

6.0 Responsibility to the Community

6.1 Health Promotion Activities

When involved in health promotion activities about all aspects of communication and related disorders and eating, drinking and swallowing disorders, a member must ensure that all information given to the public regarding the profession is accurate.

A member must not promote or make unqualified statements regarding new therapeutic procedures that are not evidence based.

6.2 Quality Service

A member must strive to maintain and develop the provision of services in line with best practice and supported by evidence.

7.0 Ethical Guidelines for Research

7.1 Client Consent

A member must ensure when research is being carried out, that necessary ethical standards must be maintained and the welfare of the subject must not be adversely affected. Informed written consent must be given by the client or legal carer.

If using medical records, prior consent should be given by the client and by the authority in charge of the records.

7.2 Confidentiality

A member must ensure that due care must be taken not to infringe the subject's right to confidentiality.

7.3 Withdrawal from Research

The subject always has the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

7.4 Ethics of Organisation

A member involved in research must adhere to the ethical guidelines/procedures set down by the employing organisation.

Revised November 2006