

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISION TO WORKPLACES, PRACTITIONERS, AND SERVICE USERS

Workplaces that arrange for **supervision** create **benefits that extends to all stakeholders** of that service.

Supervision can be a tool for managing workforce and staffing issues, supporting the professional growth and wellbeing of speech pathologists, and most importantly, providing quality and safe services to individuals.

SUPERVISION AND THE WORKPLACE

SPA's **Workforce Analysis Project** revealed the nature of unmet speech pathology demands in Australia. It also described what new graduates and more experienced professionals look for in a workplace. Speech pathologists expressed that they value access to high-quality supervision and opportunities for career progression.

There is significant evidence documenting the correlation between job satisfaction and professional support. The systematic review performed by **Ewen et al., (2020)** found that professional support was a key contributor to workplace wellbeing.

This echoes research by **Heritage et al., (2018)** and **McLaughlin & Lincoln (2009)**. Supervision also supports practitioners to develop their professional identity and 'socialisation' in the profession, such as developing collegial attitudes and practices, **(Milne & Watkins, 2014)**.

Supervisors can foster development of an organisation's values and a healthy team culture. Supervision and the value it adds to a workplace may ultimately increase recruitment and retention.

Heritage and colleagues explored why speech pathologists leave a job or the profession altogether. They found that job satisfaction, connectedness to colleagues and clients, and the ability to learn and grow contributed to a practitioner's intention to remain.

However, limited promotion opportunities, poor ties with the professional community, and lack of supervision contributed to turnover and attrition. Workplaces can foster a **supportive, connected environment** through supervision. They can also create opportunities for employee growth and promotion by developing pathways for speech pathologists to become skilled supervisors themselves.



SUPERVISION AND PRACTITIONERS

Reflective practice works best when it is a guided process. A speech pathologist with less experience benefits from the knowledge and skills of a supervisor. However, **more experienced professionals also need support** to offer a different or objective perspective in their decision-making, and to challenge assumptions.

For this reason, the **Professional Standards** and **Code of Ethics** assert that **professional support, like supervision**, is a necessary process for engaging in critical reflection, lifelong learning, and ethical practice. The professional support requirement of SPA's **certification program** helps speech pathologists to implement these standards.

Through supervision, speech pathologists may be supported to make difficult ethical considerations, develop critical thinking, become more efficient and effective practitioners, expand their knowledge and **personal scope of practice**, and provide more **culturally safe and responsive services**.

Supervisors can foster professionalism and **communication**, helping speech pathologists to manage issues that arise in the workplace and with **service users**. As the previously mentioned, research indicates **supervision** can contribute to connectedness and **wellbeing** in the workplace.



SUPERVISION AND SERVICE USERS

Ultimately, supervision is about **supporting speech pathologists to fulfil their duty of care** to service users. When speech pathology practice is effective, safe, professional and ethical, it improves the quality of life of people with communication and swallowing difficulties.

When an individual is happy with the services they receive, this has a secondary benefit for practitioners and workplaces. Effective and safe practice can reduce risk and complaints from dissatisfied service users. Better working relationships with speech pathologists can lead to greater client retention for a practice.

SPA's Professional Support Advisor can help your workplace identify supervision that fits your circumstances. For more information contact psa@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

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