

(Approved by the Board of Directors of the Educational Audiology Association September 2009)

### School-based Audiology Services

Classrooms are primarily auditory-verbal environments where listening is the predominant modality for learning. The Educational Audiology Association (EAA) asserts that educational audiologists are the professionals uniquely qualified to ensure that all students have adequate access to auditory information in their educational settings. This overview of school-based audiology services introduces a series of accompanying statements that describe some of the most pertinent areas of educational audiology practice in the schools. These include *Classroom Acoustics, Hearing Assistance Technology, Hearing Screening, Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention, Audiology Services under 504, Auditory (Re)Habilitation, Educational Audiology Services Under IDEA, Educational Clinical Partnership, and Roles in EHDI and Hearing Surveillance.*

#### ***The Population Served by Educational Audiologists***

Students with any degree or type of hearing impairment, including auditory neuropathy, unilateral or fluctuating hearing loss, or an auditory processing disorder, require the expertise of an educational audiologist. In addition, students with learning disabilities, reading/literacy difficulties, attention problems, and those struggling with English as a second language benefit from the educational audiologist's knowledge of how listening and learning is impacted by noise and classroom acoustics. They may support these students whether they receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006) or services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973). Educational audiologists interact directly with parents, as well as teachers, nurses, and other related service personnel, as part of the educational team.

#### ***Scope of Practice***

The education and training of audiologists includes a strong scientific, diagnostic, and rehabilitative focus. Audiologists are bound by professional ethics and licensing requirements to ensure that the best interests of those they serve are met. Educational audiologists specialize in the effects of hearing, listening, and auditory processing deficits on the ability of children and youth to access communication and learning. These students may be served under IDEA or 504. While the work of educational audiologists may vary from one educational setting to another, they must address the practice areas identified within IDEA for audiologists: screening, assessment, amplification, habilitation, counseling, and prevention (34CFR300.34(c)(1)); assistive technology and assistive technology services (34CFR300.5-6 & C); and routine checking of amplification devices and external components of surgically implanted medical devices worn by children in school (34CFR300.113). Based on professional scopes of practice in audiology (AAA, 2004; ASHA, 2004), speech-language pathology (ASHA, 2007), and deaf education (CED), the audiologist is the only professional that is qualified to fit and verify hearing aids and personal hearing assistance technology.

Through collaborative partnerships, educational and private (non-school-based) audiologists work together to promote the best hearing technology and support services for each child or youth they serve. Hearing loss prevention programs, hearing screening programs and classroom acoustics are other areas within the purview of the educational audiologist. Providing consultation to the school nurse on screening programs, the speech language pathologist for communication strategies, or a classroom teacher regarding acquisition of the phonemic information critical to literacy -- are all part of the scope of practice of the educational audiologist.

#### ***Typical Roles of Educational Audiologists***

The expertise of educational audiologists typically includes:

- Being well-informed on federal and state (provincial) legislation, as well as local regulations and policies related to audiology services for children ages birth to 21.
- Collecting and interpreting objective and subjective data to evaluate and monitor the combined effects of hearing, listening, and or auditory deficits and classroom acoustics.
- Understanding and describing the effects that hearing loss and auditory processing deficits can have on communication, academic performance and psycho-social development and making recommendations to address these problems.

- Assessing students' functional ability to access auditory information in the classroom to link diagnostic information, educational accommodations, and program planning.
- Guiding the provision and management of accommodations and essential hearing assistance technology to improve the student's access to auditory information.
- Educating students about their hearing impairments.
- Understanding current hearing aid and cochlear implant technology and how they best interface with hearing assistance technologies.
- Selecting and fitting amplification for classroom and other school related use.
- Ensuring that amplification is working properly and effectively by delivering training and support to students and school personnel on its use, its limitations, and specific troubleshooting techniques as well as performing verification and validation measures using standard assessment protocols.
- Supporting listening skill development, auditory training and speechreading development through consultation, collaboration, and/or direct remediation to enhance communication skills for all students with hearing loss, students using hearing aids/cochlear implants, BAHAs, or students with a diagnosed auditory processing disorder.
- Educating students and school personnel about the prevention of hearing loss.
- Promoting appropriate classroom acoustics, acoustic modifications, and accommodations to address communication access in poor acoustic environments.

#### ***Contributions to the Multidisciplinary Team***

The efforts of educational audiologists to improve access to auditory information in the educational environment address a fundamental need for all students to be able to hear and understand in the classroom. This expertise is unique from that of other professionals and related service providers whose typical focus is from an academic, social-emotional and/or speech language perspective. Together, the educational audiologist and other professionals comprise a team prepared to effectively address the needs of students with hearing, listening, and auditory processing difficulties.

The educational audiologist is a school's best resource for recommending and maintaining the appropriate assistive listening technologies for the student and the classroom team. Educational audiologists connect diagnostic audiological information to the day-to-day impact of hearing impairment in the classroom. With audiologists as active members of the educational team, students can be increasingly enabled to meet general education requirements and attain educational outcomes that match their hearing peers.

#### **References:**

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