



ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT OF VOICE & SWALLOWING FOR TRACHEOSTOMY

Certification Program

The *Health Professions and Occupations Act's* [Health and Care Professionals Regulation](#) authorizes certified speech-language pathologists (SLP) to insert an instrument, device, hand, or finger into an artificial opening in the body, for the purpose of assessing and managing voice and swallowing disorders and conditions in patients who have a tracheostomy (with or without a speaking valve).

Licensees are expected to complete the certification program objectives within the clinical setting where they plan to practice the certified restricted activity (e.g., adult, and/or paediatric clinical setting involving tracheostomies with or without speaking valves).

Certification program learning objectives



Objectives 1–4 for tracheostomy without speaking valves

Objectives 1–5 for tracheostomy that has or is being considered for a speaking valve

A Full licensee in good standing may apply to be certified to perform this restricted activity if they successfully complete the following requirements within a period of 3 years or less.

Licensees who anticipate needing longer than 3 years to complete certification program requirements may request an extension by emailing certification@chcpbc.org. Extension requests are reviewed and approved by the Licence Committee.

Supervised practice should occur after completion of observations and in order of objective number. Supervision level should decrease gradually to enable the licensee to attain autonomous practice.

Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
Objective 1	Attains clinical experience and knowledge for working with patients who have a tracheostomy, with or without ventilator dependency
1.1	Completes a minimum of one-year clinical experience as a licensed speech-language pathologist (work as Provisional and Full licensee counts).
1.2	Understands the role of SLP in the assessment/diagnosis, treatment/ management, follow-up and education of trached or ventilated patients with voice and/or swallowing disorders.
1.3	Understands the roles and responsibilities of team members in the provision of tracheostomy and ventilator care, including but not limited to nursing, medicine, respiratory therapy, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy. This must include teams for various populations, including but not limited to head and neck cancer, cardio-respiratory conditions, burns, neurological conditions, and acquired injuries.



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
1.4	Understands emergency processes in the applicable setting and knowledge of the signs of respiratory distress and airway management techniques, including: - management of respiratory emergencies (e.g., accidental dislodgement, oral and tracheal suctioning) - recognizing ventilator disconnection/failure and knowing the process to follow in those situations
1.5	Knows of the anatomical and physiological changes that occur when a tracheostomy is in place.
1.6	Understands normal and disordered respiratory and phonatory systems, pulmonary functions for respiration, airway protection, swallowing, and voice production, including post-tracheostomy anatomy.
1.7	Knows the physiological changes that occur when a tracheostomy tube is manipulated (e.g., occlusion, cuff deflation).
1.8	Understands the impact a tracheostomy tube has on respiration function, secretion management, and swallowing.
1.9	Knows the reasons why a tracheostomy and/or ventilation are required for a particular patient.
1.10	Knows the risks and benefits of tracheostomy and ventilation (short and long term) and has an awareness of the complications and impact of previous and ongoing airway management.
1.11	Knows the different methods for tracheostomy insertion and inner cannula changes.
1.12	Understands local policy on insertion, changes, and cleaning.
1.13	Identifies type, size, and cuff status of tracheostomy tubes.
1.14	Understands a wide range of tube types (i.e., standard and specialized tubes) and their function, rationale for use, and contraindications.
1.15	Understands the indications for oral and tracheal suctioning and the considerations for pulse oximetry.
1.16	Knows the different modes of ventilation, and their benefits and complications.
1.17	Understands common diseases and conditions affecting respiratory function, including prognosis and viable treatment options.
1.18	Understands the various traumas that may occur in specific populations (e.g., burns and laryngeal trauma) and the potential patterns of recovery.
1.19	Understands the community resources that may be available for various patient types with long-term tracheostomy or ventilation needs.



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
1.20	Determines cuff inflation vs. deflation and understands the changes in oral feeding in the presence of cuff inflation.
Objective 2	Understands the assessment and diagnostic voice and swallowing parameters for patients with tracheostomy and/or ventilator dependency
2.1	Understands and describes the physiological effects of cuff inflation on voice, phonation, and swallowing (including aspiration risk), and the limitations this may have on clinical assessment results. In addition, understands the developmental, cognitive, linguistic, and behavioural factors that may be involved.
2.2	Understands the use and timing of instrumental assessments including videofluoroscopy and flexible endoscopy to assess airway patency, phonation, secretion management, and swallowing function. (To practice flexible endoscopy of voice and swallowing (FEEVS), an additional certified practice is required.)
2.3	Understands the impact of tracheostomy on speech, swallowing, voice production, and airway function and the inter-relationship between respiration, swallowing, and communication.
2.4	Understands the limitations of cervical auscultation in patients with an inflated cuff and understands sub-glottic air pressure and its role in normal and altered systems.
2.5	Knows about patient co-morbidities that may have an impact on weaning.
2.6	Understands outcome measures related to the assessment findings and subsequent intervention recommendations.
2.7	Demonstrates ability to finger occlude to assess voice.
2.8	Recognizes signs of aspiration in the presence of a tracheostomy, signs of cuff leak in an inflated cuff, and determines the need for tracheal suctioning during and post swallowing assessment.
2.9	Understands the need for equipment, such as cuff pressure manometer and pulse oximeter, and team members' roles and responsibilities.
2.10	Identifies oxygen needs, type and size of tracheostomy tube, and vital signs.
2.11	Identifies contraindications for intervention and criteria to objectively assess patient tolerance for the intervention(s).
2.12	Understands the special considerations in swallowing assessments in tracheotomized individual such as candidacy for oral trials, respiratory needs, secretion management, and the weaning process.
2.13	Identifies and interprets signs and symptoms of aberrant swallowing and voice structures and function.



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
2.14	Completes a minimum of 3 observations of initial assessments and SLP diagnosis of patients who have a tracheostomy and have or are being considered for a speaking valve. Observations may be of any certified speech-language pathologist and not necessarily the supervisor of the licensee in training. Observations in other modalities (e.g., digital recordings) are acceptable.
2.15	Completes a minimum of 5 supervised comprehensive initial assessments, including SLP diagnosis.
2.16	Completes a minimum of 2 supervised reassessments.
NOTE: Observations, assessments, and SLP diagnostic proficiency must include aspects of voice and swallowing for the patient population the licensee plans to work with once certified. Objectives related to diagnosis must be achieved with a certified speech-language pathologist. Assessments must be thorough, including identifying and understanding pertinent medical information, medical test results, physical-motor status evaluation, speech, voice, cognitive-linguistic, behavioural status, swallowing status, food trials, secretion management, and upper airway assessment. Incomplete assessments cannot be counted toward achieving the objectives' minimum number.	
Objective 3	Understands the management options available for voice and swallowing disorders in a trached or ventilated patient
3.1	Understands the physiological changes when tracheostomy tubes are manipulated (e.g., cuff deflation, occlusion).
3.2	Identifies the need for additional investigations including further instrumental assessments.
3.3	Determines when a re-assessment and additional follow-up will be necessary.
3.4	Understands and can describe the communication options available for the patient including augmentative communication devices (low- and high-technology options)
3.5	Understands the oral communication options including the purpose, effect on respiration, candidacy, and function related to each option.
3.6	Provides voice and swallowing recommendations and objectives as part of the overall patient care plan in collaboration with the interprofessional team.
3.7	Understands and considers quality of life and palliative issues that are important to the patient in developing recommendations.
3.8	Completes a minimum of 3 observations of management sessions by a certified speech-language pathologist, including patient education, goal setting and patient specific outcome measurement.
3.9	Completes a minimum of 7 supervised management sessions, including patient education, goal setting, and outcome measurement (can apply to the same patients assessed in objective 2.15).



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
Objective 4	Documents assessment, diagnostic results, and interventions proficiently
4.1	Documents assessment, findings, SLP diagnoses, interpretations, and recommendations for management, accurately. A minimum of 3 reports should be reviewed by the supervisor (can be for the same patients in objective 3.9).
Objective 5	Uses Talking Trach tubes and/or one-way speaking valves as a voice treatment option proficiently
5.1	Understands the use of one-way speaking valves, including where and how to attach the valve, signs of intolerance, placement of warning labels, and status of the trach, tube, and/or ventilator.
5.2	Understands the weaning process and criteria for decannulation, including the role of one-way speaking valves, capping, and determining the appropriate timing for intervention.
5.3	Understands how a ventilator can be manipulated to optimize speech or to troubleshoot non-tolerance of a speaking valve.
5.4	Teaches the patient (or supervisor if a patient is not available) to phonate with talking tracheostomy tube or one-way speaking valve, including knowledge of the behaviours that facilitate production of sound and behaviours that are counterproductive to sound production (can be for the same patients in objective 3.9).
5.5	Completes a minimum of 3 observations of placement of a one-way speaking valve performed by an authorized health professional (e.g., certified SLP, physician, and respiratory therapist with medical delegation) and monitoring of patient tolerance post-placement. One of the observations may be in other modalities such as digital or video recordings. Can be completed with same patients in objectives 2.14 and 3.8, if pertinent.
5.6	Completes a minimum of 6 supervised placements of a one-way speaking valve. Demonstrates proficiency in placements of a one-way speaking valve. Can be completed with patients from objective 3.9 if pertinent. It is strongly recommended to complete this objective with at least 4 different patients to gain experience with different anatomies.
5.7	Teaches the patient or significant others to place and remove a one-way speaking valve. Can be completed with same patient in objective 5.6 if pertinent.
5.8	Identifies improvements in voice production, airway protection, and swallowing and troubleshoots difficulties encountered.

Licensees are responsible for documenting learning interactions with patients and patient consent in accordance with the CHCPBC Ethics and Practice Standards.

References

[CHCPBC Bylaws, section 7](#)
[CHCPBC Ethics and Practice Standards](#)
[National Speech-Language Pathology Competency Profile](#)

Resources

[Practical Learning Log](#)
[RCSLT Tracheostomy Competency Framework](#)

