



MANAGEMENT OF AIRWAY SECRETIONS

Certification Program

The *Health Professions and Occupations Act's* [Health and Care Professionals Regulation](#) authorizes certified speech-language pathologists to insert an instrument, device, hand, or finger beyond the pharynx, and into an artificial opening into the body for the purpose of managing voice and swallowing disorders.

Certification program learning objectives



Objectives 1–3 if practising oropharyngeal suctioning only

Objectives 1–6 if practising oropharyngeal and tracheal suctioning

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	Attaining background knowledge for oropharyngeal suctioning
1.1	Knowledge of the anatomical and physiological factors involved in secretion management and the impact of abnormal or altered physical structures on the client's ability to clear secretions.
1.2	Understands oral hygiene including the consequences of poor oral hygiene, indications for oral hygiene, and oral hygiene protocols and procedures.
1.3	Understands the need for oropharyngeal suctioning including: the purpose, the aspects of a clean environment that are required, indications and contraindications for use, risks associated with oral and pharyngeal suctioning.
1.4	Knows about normal and abnormal secretion management including clearance of secretions and an understanding of reflexes such as coughing.
1.5	Knows about the impact of abnormal secretions on voice and swallowing assessment and interventions.



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
1.6	Understands the risks and possible complications associated with oral hygiene and oropharyngeal suctioning and the mitigation of those risks.
1.7	Understands appropriate use of suction equipment.
1.8	Understands procedural steps involved in oropharyngeal suctioning within the workplace setting.
1.9	Understands cleaning procedures and infection control measures related to the supplies and equipment used in oropharyngeal suctioning.
Objective 2	Performs oropharyngeal suctioning
2.1	Identifies patients who are and are not appropriate for oropharyngeal suctioning.
2.2	Operates necessary equipment and cleans equipment as required including both a Yankauer suction device and a suction catheter.
2.3	Understands potential risks while performing oropharyngeal suctioning including those related to a patient's level of alertness, oral hygiene status, and other risk factors or red flags.
2.4	Completes 2 observations of oropharyngeal suctioning by an authorized health professional.
2.5	Performs oropharyngeal suctioning under supervision on a minimum of 5 patients.
NOTE: It is expected that licensees ensure appropriate oral hygiene care for all of their patients who require it. Licensees do not require an advanced certificate to perform oral hygiene care or oral suctioning.	
Objective 3	Evaluates and reports on patient outcomes
3.1	Evaluates and documents patient outcomes related to oropharyngeal suctioning.
3.2	Refers appropriately to other relevant health professionals as required, depending on the patient status and outcome of suctioning.
Objective 4	Attains background knowledge for tracheal suctioning
4.1	Knows of normal and abnormal tracheal secretions.
4.2	Knows about the changes in anatomy/physiology and the potential impacts of tracheal suctioning.
4.3	Understands oral suctioning and tracheal suctioning including candidacy, and possible outcomes.



Objectives	Knowledge, skills, and demonstrated competencies for certification program
4.4	Understands possible risks and contraindications related to tracheal suctioning and how to mitigate those risks.
4.5	Knows about a client's ability to clear secretions.
4.6	Understands the relationship between secretion management and communication, voice, swallowing, and respiratory functions.
4.7	Understands the appropriate use of suctioning equipment in a clean and sterile environment.
4.8	Understands the procedural steps involved in tracheal suctioning. NOTE: Procedures may vary from site to site and practice setting to practice setting.
Objective 5	Performs tracheal suctioning
5.1	Identifies patients who are and are not candidates for tracheal suctioning and evaluates the associated risks (e.g., eating risk).
5.2	Understands the potential risks while performing tracheal suctioning including those related to a patient's level of alertness, O2 levels, and respiratory status.
5.3	Operates necessary equipment and cleans equipment as required.
5.4	Completes 3 observations of tracheal suctioning performed by an authorized health professional.
5.5	Performs tracheal suctioning under supervision on a minimum of 8 patients.
Objective 6	Evaluates and reports on patient outcomes
6.1	Evaluates and documents patient outcomes related to tracheal suctioning.
6.2	Refers appropriately to other relevant health professionals as required, depending on patient status and outcome of suctioning.

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](#)

Resource

[Practical Learning Log](#)