

Diagnosis

How do I know if I should make a diagnosis?

Introduction

Audiologists and speech-language pathologists in Manitoba must consider a combination of clinical, ethical, cultural, and regulatory factors before making a diagnosis. Because diagnosis has significant implications (e.g. access to services, educational placement, etc.), the process must be careful, evidence-based, and context-aware. Registrants are permitted to make certain diagnoses under the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA) and Reserved Acts for each profession.

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Decisions about diagnosis must be ethically sound, evidence-based, culturally responsive, within scope of practice, and focus on the functional impact of the client. Questions to ask yourself before providing a diagnosis include:

- Am I diagnosing within the parameters of the Reserved Acts authorized to my profession in Manitoba?
- Am I qualified and competent to diagnose this condition? Is it within my scope of practice and experience?
- Do I have informed consent?
- Would the client be better served through collaboration with other professionals to make the diagnosis?
- Does a diagnosis need to be made to provide support to the client?
- Am I free from pressure to over/under diagnose and am I presenting strengths and needs fairly?
- Are the tools I'm using valid and appropriate for this client and am I trained to use them?
- Are standardized tests that are valid, reliable, and appropriate available to help make a diagnosis?
- Are the tools appropriate for the client's cultural/linguistic background?
- Is this a disorder vs. a difference or could another factor explain the difficulties?
- Will diagnosis benefit the client and how does providing a diagnosis reflect real-world impact of daily communication and participation?
- Are findings consistent across settings and measures and can I explain any inconsistencies?
- Do I have multiple data sources to support the diagnosis? (e.g. standardized testing, clinical observation, case history, input from caregivers/teachers, etc.)
- Am I diagnosing a symptom or is there a deeper root cause that better explains what I am seeing?
- Is the concern better explained by an underlying issue that should be diagnosed by another professional?
- Can I provide services/therapies on a suspected diagnosis without making a formal diagnosis? Is diagnosis necessary to proceed with therapies?
- Can I clearly justify the diagnosis or should I use "suspected" or monitor instead?
- Can I document the diagnosis in a way that is clear, competent, and defensible?