

COLUMBIA SPEECH & LANGUAGE SERVICES INC. COVID-19 POLICIES

Last revised: June 10, 2020

This document outlines Columbia Speech & Language Services Inc.'s (CSLSI) plan to keep our clinicians, staff and clients as safe as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As our province's situation regarding COVID-19 is fluid and subject to change, we will be updating this document as needed to reflect guidance received from the College of Speech and Hearing Health Professionals of BC (CSHBC), WorkSafeBC, BC Ministry of Health, and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Please note that, though we are meeting or exceeding all standards of infection control in an attempt to minimize risk, with any face-to-face visit some risk of transmission still remains. Clients will be required to sign a consent form acknowledging this risk and waiving any liability that CSLSI may have in this regard.

Clients, clinicians, and staff are all expected to follow the protocols below and should only consider face-to-face visits if they understand and agree to comply with the protocols below.

DELIVERY OF THERAPY SERVICES

- Clinicians and clients are encouraged to work via teletherapy (i.e. remotely) whenever practical. Face-to-face services will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the treating therapist's discretion depending on:
 - The client's level of vulnerability (e.g. if the client is immunocompromised or elderly)
 - Risk to the clinician of exposure (e.g. if a clinician or a family member is at risk)
 - The viability of teletherapy sessions
 - The urgency of a client's need
- In-person visits at home or at any other indoor space besides our offices will not be conducted at this time.

HAND HYGIENE

- Anyone entering the clinic is required to use the hand sanitizer provided upon entering and upon the clinician's request during the session.
- Clinicians and staff are required to wash their hands or use available hand sanitizer in between sessions and upon entering or exiting the clinic.

PRE-SCREENING AND HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

- Clients will be asked several screening questions before each face-to-face appointment and will be required to sign a consent form acknowledging the risk of face-to-face treatment. This must be completed prior to the appointment.
- **An appointment must be cancelled immediately** if either the client or clinician experiences any of the following symptoms (even if they are mild)¹:
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Sore throat or painful swallowing
 - Stuffy or runny nose
 - Loss of sense of smell
 - Headache or muscle aches
 - Fatigue or loss of appetite

¹ List of symptoms copied from <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

- Any clinician, staff member or client experiencing any of these symptoms will be required to discuss the advisability of in-person treatment prior to resuming face-to-face sessions.

CLEANING AND SANITIZING

- Our clinic will ensure that all shared equipment and materials will be sanitized in between uses. Please note that we will be reducing or suspending use of materials that are more difficult to clean e.g. soft toys. We will also be regularly sanitizing high touch areas including but not limited to doorknobs, countertops, telephones and plexiglass barriers. Sanitation standards provided by the BC Ministry of Health will be adhered to².
- We ask that clients limit personal belongings that are brought into the clinic (e.g. bags, coats, umbrellas) if possible.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND SCHEDULING

- Whenever possible, clients and clinicians will keep a reasonable physical distance (i.e. 6 feet/2 meters) from one another. Because of the nature of our work, this may not always be possible.
- No clients will be permitted to wait in the reception area. This means:
 - Clients are asked to arrive exactly on time for their appointment (i.e. **not early**).
 - Clients must attend unaccompanied unless physical assistance or care is required for those with a disability or for young children. If a child requires parent/guardian accompaniment during their therapy session, a maximum of one parent is permitted inside the therapy room, and the other(s) must wait outside the clinic.
- Appointments will be staggered to limit the number of people in the clinic at one time and also to allow for adequate cleaning and sanitizing in between appointments.

PAYMENT

- Contactless payment is preferred in the form of e-transfers or credit card payment in advance via phone. However, we can also accept credit, debit or cheque if necessary. Clinic staff will sanitize the credit/debit terminal after each use.
- We ask that, where possible, you consider using your debit card or e-transfer to help us keep our overhead costs down as we work to recover from the losses of the past months. Visa/Mastercard charges us a substantial transaction fee; a debit transaction, e-transfer or cheque costs us much less. (Note also that not all services that we provide can be paid via credit card.)

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Clients, clinicians, visitors and staff should wear masks and/or face shields whenever possible. We understand that, for various reasons, this is not always practical; exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis (e.g. type of therapy is not conducive to concealing one's face, young children).
- Even if it is not possible to wear a mask during a session due to the type of therapy, we ask that clients bring one to the clinic to wear before and after the session. In the event that you do not have one, one can be purchased from us for \$2.00.

CANCELLATION POLICY

- Our cancellation policy (48 hours' notice within business hours i.e. Monday to Friday 9-5) still applies. If a client or clinician is experiencing **any** (even mild) symptoms of COVID-19 (see list above), the symptoms must be reported to the clinician and the session must take place via teletherapy.

² http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19_MOH_BCCDC_EnvironmentalCleaning.pdf