

PATIENT/CLIENT BILL OF RIGHTS

LOUISIANA TECH SPEECH AND HEARING CENTER

All patients/clients who receive services from health-care professionals have certain rights that are recognized by ethical practices boards and by the courts. These rights are referred to by many professionals as a patient's "bill of rights." If patients/clients are denied any of these rights, or are not informed of their rights, the health-care professional may be liable in terms of loss of license or certification and may also be subject to legal action.

A list of patient rights was compiled by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). These rights are summarized below with statements of the implications for speech-language pathologists and audiologists. The bulleted statements are examples of implications of the rights and attempts to protect these rights at the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center.

1. The right to a reasonable response to requests/needs for treatment or service

- Following a request, a patient/client must be scheduled for a speech, language, or hearing diagnostic evaluation within a reasonable period of time or be given the option of being referred elsewhere. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, every attempt is made to schedule a diagnostic appointment within two weeks of a request with the exception of those requests received in the summer months.
- Following a diagnostic evaluation, a patient/client must be scheduled for treatment within a reasonable period of time or be given the option of being referred elsewhere. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, every effort is made to schedule treatment, if recommended, within the academic quarter of the diagnostic evaluation or in the next academic quarter.
- Reports that are to be sent to patients/clients, families, and other professionals must be compiled within a reasonable period of time. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, diagnostic reports are written, approved, and mailed within two weeks of the diagnostic evaluation. Treatment reports are written, approved, and mailed no later than the ending date of the academic quarter as determined by the University calendar.
- If a patient's/client's request for clinical services cannot be honored, the reasons must be given. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, if appropriate clinical services cannot be provided or cannot be provided in a timely manner, the patient/client is informed immediately after the decision is made and the reasons are given.

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- When another health-care professional refers an individual to a speech-language pathologist or audiologist, the referring professional has a right to receive a prompt response to his or her request. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, the referring health-care professional is sent written notification that the request has been received with the statement that reports of the services provided will be sent in a timely manner.

2. The right to considerate and respectful care

- The health-care professional should be on time for all appointments. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, student clinicians and faculty supervisors have advanced knowledge of appointments, are in the Center's reception area at the time of the appointment, and wait at least 15 minutes past the appointed time for the patient's/client's arrival.
- The health-care professional should include, where appropriate, the patient/client and his or her family in the treatment planning process. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, individual treatment plans are developed for, and discussed with, all patients/clients and their families (where appropriate).
- The health-care professional should answer treatment and prognosis-related questions honestly. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, a final treatment conference is scheduled for patients/clients and their families (where appropriate) to discuss progress, recommendations, and prognoses.
- The health-care professional must be sensitive to and respect the cultural background of patients/clients. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, every effort is made to choose diagnostic instruments and treatment procedures and stimuli that are appropriate for the patient's/client's cultural background and to modify the therapeutic relationship to accommodate cultural backgrounds.

3. The right to make health-care decisions in collaboration with the physician and other involved health-care professionals

- At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, a patient/client or the parent of a minor child has the right to accept or refuse recommendations for treatment that are made by the clinical supervisors.
- At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, a patient/client or the parent of a minor child has the right to pursue treatment options that are not recommended by the clinical supervisors. However, the Center is not obligated to provide treatments that have not been recommended by the clinical supervisors.

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4. The right to information necessary to make treatment decisions that reflect wishes

- In order to make informed decisions, patients/clients and families have a right to sufficient information about treatment options to allow them to make such decisions. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, various treatment options are described and the reasons for recommending the treatment options are given.

5. The right to information at admission on grievance procedures and specific patient/client rights

- Before beginning treatment, a patient/client should be informed of his or her rights and whom to contact regarding those rights. As part of the admission procedures at the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, all patients/clients and the parents of minor children are given written information about the services to be provided, confidentiality policies and procedures, the Center's policies for compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the name of a contact person who will attempt to resolve grievances.

6. The right to participate in discussion of ethical issues

- If a health-care professional has some concern about ethical reasons for providing or continuing treatment, the patient/client and his or her family (where appropriate) has a right to participate in a discussion. When a clinical supervisor at the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center believes that services cannot be provided or continued without violating the Code of Ethics of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, these concerns are discussed with the patient/client and his or her family (where appropriate).

7. The right to be informed of any human experimentation or research affecting treatment

- A patient/client has the right to be informed if any treatment provided by a health-care professional is considered experimental in nature or if the data collected from treatment will be used for research purposes. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, any research that is to be conducted as part of treatment is approved by the Louisiana Tech Institutional Review Board prior to initiation of the research. The patient/client or the parent of a minor child then gives his or her written informed consent to receive the treatment or for the data collected to be used for research purposes. The Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center does not engage in research that involves predicible risks.

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8. The right to personal privacy within law's limits and to personal privacy and confidentiality of information

- A patient/client has a right to expect any information he or she gives a health-care professional orally or in writing and any reports that are written about him or her to be treated as confidential. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, written consent is required for information to be communicated to any one other than the patient/client or the parents of a minor child.
- Patient/client records must be protected from unauthorized and unnecessary access. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, only persons with a legitimate reason to access such information are able to do so and written verification is required to document when any records are accessed and for what purpose.
- Written consent from the patient/client or parent of a minor child is required for audio or video recordings of diagnostic or treatment sessions. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, patients/clients or parents of a minor child give their written consent for diagnostic or treatment sessions to be recorded and have knowledge of how the recordings will be used. Written permission is also required for students-in-training to observe diagnostic or treatment sessions.
- Patients'/clients' names or photographs cannot be used for marketing purposes without written permission. At the Louisiana Tech Speech and Hearing Center, written consent is required for the use of patient/client names or photographs for any purpose.

References

Breske, S. (1994, February). JCAHO established 'bill of rights' for patients. *Advance Rehabilitation, 14*, 16-17.

Silverman, F.H. (1992). *Legal/ethical considerations, restrictions, and obligations for clinicians who treat communicative disorders*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Silverman, F.H. (2003). *Essentials of professional issues in speech-language pathology and audiology*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.