



SUPERVISION AND MENTORING

MENTORING AND YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

With the start of a new year, it is a good time for speech pathologists to reflect on how they want to continue their professional development, including extending knowledge in a current area of practice, expanding into a new area, or developing skills that are related to speech pathology practice such as preparing to supervise or support other professionals.

The Association's resource, [Planning your CPD – Optimising professional learning](#), suggests that speech pathologists can engage in an action cycle of Plan, Appraise, Engage and Evaluate when considering Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Mentors can be a helpful resource along every step of this action cycle.

Plan

The resource mentioned above describes five areas for planning CPD, each of which may be supported by a mentor. A skilled mentor can help the professional determine the **purpose** and **goals** of the CPD, or why they are undertaking the learning and what they hope to achieve with the new knowledge. When determining the speech pathologist's current **level**, experienced mentors can discuss what skills are required to meet goals and help to objectively identify any gaps in knowledge.

Learners should also consider what **mode** of learning is most suitable and the **practicalities** of attaining goals, which may be more successful with the assistance of a mentor. Once learner goals are determined, the mentor may be a resource for identifying potential CPD opportunities.

Appraise

Once CPD sources are identified, it is important to appraise them from both a practical and evidence-based perspective. Mentors who are familiar with an area can support appraisal of external scientific evidence; clinical or research expertise; and client perspectives that a CPD opportunity is based in; as well as relevance to the practitioner's context. They may also support the speech pathologist in determining if the content, mode and other factors will meet their learning needs.

Engage

Although the speech pathologist will often engage in the CPD on their own, a mentor might be helpful in supporting them with pre-learning activities and preparing questions that they will ask instructors. After engaging in the CPD there is a clear role for mentors to assist the professional in integrating knowledge into practice, consolidating new skills, and identifying additional learning resources.

Evaluate

Another area in which a mentor may be particularly helpful is in evaluating the learning that occurred. Engaging together in **critical reflection** and assessing what skills the professional gained can be important to this process. The speech pathologist and mentor can also discuss the impact of the learning on clients or others, and review the quality of the CPD itself. Upon evaluation, the action cycle may be repeated for additional, required learning.

Identifying a Mentor

Mentors typically support longer-term professional development. Where a speech pathologist seeks information and support related to their current caseload, supervision is typically the most suitable partnership and resource for this. A register of supervisors, may be found on the [Supervision](#) webpage.

Mentors may be identified amongst colleagues or other professionals with relevant experience. SPA maintains an online [Find a Mentor](#) feature on which members may search for mentors by their self-identified experience. When determining whether a mentor would be a good fit, it may be helpful to ask about their experience working in the professional areas of interest and what relevant professional development they have engaged in.

Members are encouraged to inform the [Professional Support Advisor](#) when they have entered a mentoring partnership, so the Association can offer ongoing support. In any case, partnerships should be formalised with a Mentoring Agreement and sessions should be documented. Resources for these are found on SPA's [Mentoring](#) webpage.

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