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Policy No. 14-001

Speech Language Pathologist Policy for the Use of Topical Anesthesia

Speech-language pathologists provide evaluation and treatment services that may require the use of topical anesthetics to complete certain functional evaluation and/or treatment activities. For example, a patient may require the use of a topical anesthetic while undergoing a Fiberoptic Endoscopic Examination of Swallowing (FEES) procedure or Video Stroboscopy for the purpose of evaluating an individual's voice or swallowing function.

The Massachusetts Board of Registration of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (hereinafter, the "Board") interprets G.L. c. 112, § 138 to allow licensed speech-language pathologists who are specially trained to use topical anesthetics when necessary to complete such procedures and evaluations, pursuant to a physician's order and under the general supervision of a physician, provided that there are protocols in place for emergency response.

The following guidance has been adopted by the Board for speech-language pathologists when using topical anesthetics:

1. The speech-language pathologist must check facility policies to ensure that he or she may apply a topical anesthetic in that facility.
2. The speech-language pathologist must undergo training in the use of topical anesthetics that includes information about negative reactions and follow-up care. It is required that such training be documented in the speech-language pathologist's personnel file, be updated regularly, and be readily available to the Board upon request.
3. The speech-language pathologist must have an on-going relationship with a physician for information and referral purposes.
4. The speech-language pathologist must inform the patient of the need for the use of a topical anesthetic, and of the right to have a physician (instead of the speech-language pathologist) administer the topical anesthetic. Informed consent forms required by the facility must be signed by the patient.
5. The speech-language pathologist must have access to an appropriate medical professional and/or facility, with appropriate emergency response protocols in place, in the event that an adverse reaction occurs.
6. Speech-language pathologists should review relevant scope of practice documents, position statements, and related ethics issues prior to implementing the use of topical anesthetics in their practice.

