

# ACCESSIBILITY: INTERACTING WITH AND PROVIDING SERVICE TO CLIENTS WHO ARE DEAF, ORAL DEAF, DEAFENED OR HARD OF HEARING

## POLICY:

Pembroke Regional Hospital (PRH) is committed to meeting the Accessibility needs of all person with disabilities in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards O.Reg. 191/11 under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005*.

## PREAMBLE:

People who have hearing loss may be deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- People who are profoundly deaf may identify themselves as culturally deaf or oral deaf. In deaf culture, indicated by a capital “D,” the term is used to describe a person who has severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing.
- Oral deaf is a term describing a person who was born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use American Sign Language.
- The term “deafened” describes a person who has lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. The person may use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speechreading or sign language.
- The term “hard of hearing” describes a person who uses their residual hearing (hearing that remains) and speech to communicate. The person may supplement communication by speechreading, hearing aids, sign language and/or communication devices.

## DEFINITIONS:

### Assistive Devices:

An assistive device is a tool, technology, or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating, or lifting. It helps the person to maintain his/her independence at home, at work, and in the community. The following assistive devices may be used by persons who are deaf, oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing:

- Hearing aid – makes sound louder and clearer
- Paper and pen
- Personal amplification device (e.g., pocket talker)
- FM transmitter system or other amplification devices – boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noise
- Phone amplifier
- Relay service
- Teletypewriter (TTY) – helps people who are unable to speak or hear to communicate by phone. The person types their messages on the TTY keyboard and messages are sent using telephone lines to someone who has a TTY, or to an operator (Bell Relay Service) who passes the message to someone who doesn't have a TTY.
- Hearing ear dog
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter

## **GUIDELINES:**

- Attract the client/patient's attention before speaking. Generally, the best way is by a gentle touch on the shoulder or with a gentle wave of your hand.
- Ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Move to a well-lit area, if available, where your client/patient can see your face.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
- Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. American Sign Language may be your client/patient's first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.
- Look at and speak directly to your client/patient. Address your client/patient, not the interpreter or support person.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Confirm that your client/patient understands you.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible, so the person can hear or concentrate better.
- Don't assume that the client/patient knows sign language or reads lips.

## **REFERENCES:**

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. Ministry of Community and Social Services February 2009.