

Bluewater Health Corporate Policy Manual

Category	Communications and Public Affairs	Policy
Section		
Title:	Accessible Formats and Communications Supports	
Issuing Body	Chief, Communications and Public Affairs	COR-COMPA-A-5.160
Approved by	Executive Council	
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Controlled document. Any documents appearing in paper form must be used for reference purposes only. The on-line copy on the file server above must be considered the current documentation.		

Purpose Statement

Bluewater Health provides equitable treatment to people with disabilities who use hospital services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Policy Statement

Except as otherwise provided by AODA, Bluewater Health shall, upon request and in consultation with the requester, provide or arrange to provide accessible formats and communications supports for persons with disabilities. This commitment extends to patients, families, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities.

Applicability or Scope

This policy applies to all materials and communications produced by Bluewater Health for release to the public whether produced in house or on behalf of the hospital. It does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information and information that the hospital does not control directly or indirectly. Accessible formats and communications supports shall be provided in a timely manner, taking into account the person’s accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons. The timeframe for the conversion process of a document into an accessible format, or the provision of a communications support, can vary depending on the format chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents, and the number of documents to be converted.

Noncompliance carries significant financial penalties for the organization.

Responsibilities

- Communications & Public Affairs will advise staff and the public of the availability of accessible formats and communications supports through the Bluewater Health website, on digital screens and in the Patient and Family Guide.
- Any staff member can receive a request for an accessible format or communications support in person, by phone or by an electronic format such as email or website eForm. Upon receipt, staff will consult with the requester to determine the preferred format, whether the request can be met, and how long accommodating the request will take (*see Appendix B for resources*). Once the appropriate format or support is determined, staff shall provide it or arrange for its provision. Communications & Public Affairs is available during weekday office hours for consultation to help determine if information can be converted to an alternate format. The department where the request originates is responsible for the cost of conversion, materials and distribution of information. If it is

determined the information or communications are unconvertible, the department shall provide the requester with:

- a) an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
 - b) a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.
- Managers are responsible for:
 - Creating and maintaining services free from discrimination toward persons with disabilities.
 - Covering the cost associated with accessible formats and communication supports of materials originating from their departments, and tracking associated costs.
 - Ensuring employees are aware of this policy and are logging requests received by their departments.
 - Ensuring employees are following through the requested accessible format and communication supports.
 - Monitoring situations where requests for accessible formats and communication supports have not been provided and determine ways to make the information more convertible for the future.
 - Ensuring staff provide requesters with an explanation as to why information or communications are unconvertible.
 - Overseeing the provision of a summary of the unconvertible information or communication support to the requester.

Contact information

For clarification of this policy, contact Communications & Public Affairs at Ext. 4471 or by email at communications@bluewaterhealth.ca.

Evaluation

This policy will be updated in accordance with Bluewater Health's standard of three years.

Authority

This policy is issued under the authority of the Chief, Communications & Public Affairs and approved by Executive Council.

References

All patient information must be maintained in strict confidence and transmitted in a secure way in accordance with Bluewater Health's [Confidentiality Policy](#)
[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11\]](#)
[Accessibility Standards for Information and Communications](#)
[Bluewater Health Accessibility Policy](#)
[Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19](#)
[Integrated Accessibility Standards](#)

Definitions

Communication - The interaction between two or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital or images is provided, sent or received.

Communication Supports - May include, but are not limited to:

- **Verbal or written explanation** of a document, video or patient teaching aid
- **Screen reader software:** Screen readers use a speech-synthesizer to either read text from a computer screen or convert it to Braille. For readers to work, the original information must be formatted properly in a structured electronic file (ex: BrowseAloud)

- **Transcription:** The conversion of speech into a written or electronic text document.
- **Captioning:** The provision of written words that accompany spoken words in a video. Captioning usually appears on the bottom of the screen.
- **Sign language**
- **Alternative and augmentative communication supports:** Supports such as an FM loop system or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) – otherwise known as real-time captioning.

Accessible Formats - May include, but are not limited to:

- **Large print:** The minimum suggested font size for printed material is 12-point size, however someone with low vision may request up to 48-point font in order to read the information.
- **Plain language:** Keeping text as clear and as easy to read as possible is not only beneficial for people with learning disabilities and low literacy skills, it improves comprehension for all clients and will make adaptation to other formats easier. All technical terms and acronyms should be fully explained.
- **Electronic versions:** HTML or electronic text version online. An electronic text means of presentation of information in order to enable various computer programs to convert the information into a “readable” format. Electronic text where all illustrations or graphical information is explained fully in text. Ex. Microsoft Word – large text.
- **Recorded audio**
- **Braille:** A tactile system of raised dots representing letters. It is used by people who are blind or deafblind and is produced using Braille transcription software.

Conversion Ready - An electronic or digital format that facilitates conversion into an accessible format.

Unconvertible - it is not technically possible to convert the information or communications; or the technology to convert the information or communications is not available.

All underlined terms in this document are defined in the **Corporate Policy and Procedure Glossary**.

Appendices

Appendix A – Guidelines for Communicating with People Who Have Disabilities

Appendix B – Resources for Accessible Formats and Communications Supports

APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Communicating with People Who Have Disabilities

The following information is provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Hearing Impaired

People experiencing hearing loss may use assistive devices, like hearing aids, special telephones, sign language interpreters, various amplifiers or a pen and paper. They may also read lips or prefer to communicate through email, texting or a TTY (available through 311 operators).

TTY stands for Teletypewriter, a type of telephone that allows callers to send typed messages to each other across phone lines. TTY users can directly call other TTY numbers or they can connect with a Relay Service. A standard phone user can also place a call to a TTY user through the Relay operator. You give the operator your name, the name of the person you are calling, and the number you wish to reach. Using the Relay Service locally is free. For long-distance, any standard long-distance charges would apply.

Visually Impaired

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read signs, locate landmarks, or see hazards. Some clients may use a guide dog or white cane; others may not. Some customers simply need to view written materials like documents, receipts, menus, brochures, instructions or labels in large print, or with the help of a magnifier. Many also use electronic readers, which read information to them from an accessible document or an accessible website.

Deafblind

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some degree. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating.

Intervenors are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling.

- Speak directly to your client, not to the intervenor.
- Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach your client who is deafblind.
- A client who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability refers to a variety of disorders that affect how a person acquires, retains, or takes in information. People with learning disabilities learn differently.

Learning disabilities are specific impairments that can result in problems with reading and

language-based learning (dyslexia), problems with mathematics (dyscalculia), or problems with writing and fine motor skills (dysgraphia).

This disability may become apparent when the person has difficulty reading material or taking in and processing the information you are providing.

- Take some time - people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process, understand and respond.
- Provide information in a way that works for your client. For example, keep a pen and paper handy. Explain, and then review and repeat the information to the client using your notes.
- If you are discussing confidential information, consider giving the notes to your client or offering to destroy them.
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide for your clients.

Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way the person acts, asks questions or uses body language. However, they may understand you more than you realize.

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language.
- Make sure your client understands what you've said. You can ask, "Do you understand this?"
- Provide one piece of information at a time. You can break down the information into simpler concepts, without exaggerating speech or gestures or being patronizing.
- You can repeat information.

Speech or Language Disabilities

Cerebral palsy, stuttering, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for the person to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. A person with this type of disability may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

- Do not assume that just because a person has this disability they also have another.
- Give your client whatever time they need to get their point across. If appropriate, offer to move to a more comfortable location.
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no," if possible.
- Do not interrupt or finish your client's sentences. Give them time to finish.

APPENDIX B

Resources for Accessible Formats and Communications Supports

These resources can be useful in the provision of accessible formats and communication supports:

Accessible Information and Communication, A Guide for Small Business: provides a comprehensive overview of how to provide information in accessible formats at <http://www.gaates.org/aic/index.html>.

Accessible Digital Office Documents Project: a one stop shop for creating accessible digital documents using today's most popular office applications (Microsoft, Open Office, iwork, Corel, Google Docs, etc.) at <http://adod.idrc.ocad.ca>.

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART): this service can be used at public events to display spoken words on large screens to help participants with hearing loss to follow speeches. Services can be provided on location or remotely. To book CART services contact the Canadian Hearing Society (519-337-8307).

Sign Language Interpretation/Intervenor: the two most frequently used sign languages in Canada are American Sign Language ASL (English) and Langue Signe du Quebec LSQ (French). To book these services contact the Canadian Hearing Society (519-337-8307).

Braille: in order to make a request for a document in Braille you will need to ask the requestor if they require a document in Grade 1 or Grade 2 Braille and you will need to provide the document in a plain text format. A company that provides print Braille and other accessible formats of documents is T-Base Communications (1-800-563-0668).

Assistive Technology (AT): refers to devices, which enable persons living with vision loss to perform tasks that would otherwise be more difficult to accomplish. To learn more about how to access these services contact the CNIB (1-800-563-2642).

Assistive Listening Devices (FM Loop system): used as a system where the audio source is broadcast wirelessly over an FM frequency. The person who is listening may use a small FM receiver tuned into the signal, and listen at their preferred volume.

Video Captioning Services/Transcripts: some video production companies provide video captioning as an additional service. It is important to include this criterion when ordering the development of videos. YouTube offers video captioning of its posted videos.