

# Accessibility Policy

## Policy Statement

The Municipality of Powassan is committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of Municipal services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, visitors and employees with visible or non-visible disabilities.

## Purpose

This policy is intended to provide the overarching framework to guide the review and development of other Municipality of Powassan policies, standards, procedures, By-laws and guidelines to comply with the standards developed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11. (the AODA).

## Application

This Policy applies to all Municipal employees, volunteers, and to any individual or organization that provides goods, services or facilities to the public or other third parties on behalf of the Municipality, in accordance with the legislation.

The Powassan Union & Public Library reports to a separate board and as such follows their own respective policy.

## Principles

Municipal services, programs, goods, and facilities, are to be available to people with disabilities in a manner that:

- Is free from discrimination
- Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
- Seeks to provide integrated services
- Provides an opportunity equitable to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services, and;
- Takes into consideration a person's disability

## **Policy Requirements**

### **General Standards**

The Municipality of Powassan is a designated public sector organization under the AODA and is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

### **Establishment of Accessibility Plans and Policies**

The Municipality shall produce a multi-year Accessibility Plan. The plan will be posted on the Municipality's website and shall be made available in an accessible format and with communication supports, upon request. Progress on the plan will be provided annually in the Municipality of Powassan's Municipal Accessibility Plan update report to Council. The Accessibility Plan shall be reviewed and, if necessary, updated at least once every five (5) years.

The Municipality of Powassan maintains policies governing how the Municipality shall meet its requirements under the AODA, and the Municipality will provide policies in an accessible format, upon request.

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Except as otherwise provided by the AODA, the Municipality of Powassan shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication 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, in accordance with the Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedures. (See Appendix A)

This does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information or communications and information that the Municipality does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. If it is determined that information or communications are unconvertible, the department shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- a. an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible;
- b. a summary of the unconvertible information or communications

### **Procurement of Goods, Services and Facilities**

When procuring goods, services, or facilities, the Municipality shall incorporate accessibility criteria and features, unless it is not feasible (practicable). If not practicable, the Municipality shall provide an explanation, upon request.

### **Training**

All Municipal employees, volunteers, and third parties providing goods and services to members of the public on the Municipality's behalf, as well as those who develop the policies, practices and procedures

governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties will receive accessibility training.

This training shall include:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and instruction about the following matters:
  - How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability;
  - How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
  - How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability;
  - What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services; and,
- A review of the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191/11) and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.

The training provided shall be appropriate to the duties of the employee, volunteer or third party. Training shall take place as soon as is practicable and upon completion, the Municipality shall keep a record of the training provided including the dates on which accessibility training took place.

## **Feedback**

Feedback on how services were delivered to people with disabilities shall be invited, forwarded to the appropriate personnel, responded to, documented and tracked. Feedback shall be collected by phone at 3-1-1 and Next Talk TTY (Teletypewriter), by e-mail, and in person. Feedback shall be accepted in accessible formats and with other communication supports as required.

## **Documentation**

Documentation that describes this Policy and each of its requirements shall be maintained on the Municipality's website [powassan.net](http://powassan.net) and provided to individuals, upon request, in the appropriate format or communication support.

## **Customer Service Standards**

### **Assistive devices**

Municipal employees, volunteers, and third party contractors shall accommodate the use of personal assistive devices including but not limited to, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, scooters and Braille display boards. Assistive devices (ie elevator) shall be kept in good working order and the public shall be informed of their availability.

## **Service animals**

Municipal employees, volunteers, and third party contractors shall accommodate the use of service animals by people with disabilities who are accessing Municipal services or goods unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law, such as food preparation areas as prohibited by Food Premises, R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 562 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7.

## **Support persons**

Where a person with a disability accessing Municipal goods or services is accompanied by a support person, Municipal employees, volunteers and third party contractors shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and shall ensure that the person with a disability can access the support person while on the premises.

## **Admission fees**

If the Municipality charges an admission fee in connection with a support person's presence at an event or function, the Municipality shall ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, that is payable in respect of the support person accompanying a person with a disability.

## **Notice of service disruption**

In the event that there is a temporary service disruption in the availability of facilities, services or goods used by persons with disabilities (e.g., temporary loss of elevator service), the Municipality shall give notice to the public of the reason for the disruption, the date(s) of disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available. Such notice may be provided by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances, and may include postings in conspicuous places at the affected premises, other Municipal facilities, and the Municipality's website ([www.powassan.net](http://www.powassan.net)), as well as by other means such as a website that will ensure that the notice reaches those persons potentially affected by the temporary disruption.

## **Information and Communication Support Standards**

### **Communication**

When communicating with a person with a disability, Municipal employees, volunteers and third party contractors shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. Guidelines for communicating with people who have various types of disabilities are provided in appendix B of the Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedures.

### **Terminology**

When referring to people with disabilities, Municipal employees, volunteers and third party contractors shall use terminology that adheres to guidelines provided in the Municipality of Powassan's Accessibility Training for Customer Service. (Appendix B)

## **Accessible Websites and Web Content**

Internet websites and web content controlled directly by the Municipality of Powassan or through a contractual relationship that allows for modification of the product shall conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level A and AA in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards.

## **Emergency Procedures, Plans and Information**

The Municipality shall provide all existing public emergency procedures, plans and public safety information, upon request in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports in a timely manner.

## **Employment Standards**

### **Recruitment**

The Municipality of Powassan shall post information about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process. Job applicants who are individually selected for an interview and/or testing shall be notified that accommodations for material to be used in the process are available, upon request. The Municipality shall consult with any applicant who requests an accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability. Successful applicants shall be notified about the Municipality's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities as part of their offer of employment.

### **Employee Supports**

The Municipality will inform employees of the policies used to support employees with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability. The Municipality will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment and provide updated information to all employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employee**

Upon an employee's request, the Municipality shall consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

- a. information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and
- b. information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

The Municipality will consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

## **Workplace Emergency Response Information**

If an employee's disability is such that workplace emergency response information is necessary and the Municipality is aware of the need for accommodation, this information shall be provided to employees. In addition, this information shall be provided, with the employee's consent, to the person designated to provide assistance. The information shall undergo review when the employee moves to a different location, when the employee's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed and when the Municipality reviews its general emergency response plan.

## **Documented Individual Accommodation Plans**

A written process for the development and maintenance of documented individual accommodation plans shall be developed for employees with disabilities. If requested, these plans shall include information regarding accessible formats and communications supports. If requested, the plans shall include individualized workplace emergency response information.

## **Return to Work Process**

The Municipality shall have in place a documented return to work process for employees returning to work due to disability and requiring disability-related accommodations. This return to work process shall outline the steps that the Municipality shall take to facilitate the return to work.

## **Performance Management and Career Development and Redeployment**

The Municipality shall take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans when providing career development, performance management and when considering redeployment

## **Transportation Standards**

### **Taxicabs**

Owner and operators of taxicabs licensed by the Municipality of Powassan are prohibited from charging additional fares or fees to persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities and for the storage of mobility aids or mobility assistive devices. The Municipality requires that taxicabs licensed by the Municipality make available vehicle registration and identification information in an accessible format.

## **Built Environment Standards**

The Municipality shall comply with the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for The Built Environment) when undertaking new construction and redevelopment of public spaces in the following areas:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes;
- Outdoor public use eating areas;
- Outdoor play spaces;
- Exterior paths of travel;

- Accessible Parking;
- Obtaining Services; and
- Maintenance of accessible elements.

The Municipality shall ensure that the Municipal Accessibility Design Standards reflect the AODA Built Environment Standards.

## Responsibilities

The Municipality of Powassan is responsible for reviewing this Policy annually and recommending amendments to ensure on-going compliance with regulated accessibility standards and legislated obligations.

- Supervisors and managers shall ensure that they and their staff are familiar with and comply with this Policy.

## Monitoring /Contraventions

The Failure to comply with the AODA regulations can result in administrative penalties.

Supervisors and managers shall monitor current practices to ensure compliance.

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## Legislative and Administrative Authorities

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11  
 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, O. Reg. 429/07  
 Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11  
 Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19

## Definitions

**Accessible Formats** - may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Communication Supports** - may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications

**Disability** - is defined, per Section 2 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 and the Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19, as follows:

- “any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability

- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

**Service Animals** – are defined, per Section 4(9) of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, O. Reg. 429/07, as follows:

“an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability:

- (a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- (b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.”

**Support Person** – is defined, per Section 4(8) Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, O. Reg. 429/07, as follows:

“a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.”

Unconvertible - information or communications are unconvertible if it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communications or the technology to convert the information or communications is not readily available

- Accommodations, Disability-related
- Disability
- Personal Support Workers
- Service Animals
- Support Person

## Enquires

For additional information please contact the Municipal Office at 705-724-2813 or e-mail: [info@powassan.net](mailto:info@powassan.net)

## Appendices

Appendix A: Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure

Appendix B: Accessibility Training for Customer Service Guidelines

Appendix C: Resources for Accessible Formats and Communications Supports



# Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure

Approved By: Council

Approval Date:

Effective Date:

## Application

This procedure applies to Municipal employees, volunteers and other persons or organizations that provide goods, services or facilities to the public or other third parties on behalf of the Municipality, in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Regulation developed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, S.O.2005, c.11. and in support of the Municipality of Powassan's Accessibility Policy.

The procedures apply to all materials and communications produced by the Municipality of Powassan for release to the public whether produced in house or on behalf of the Municipality (i.e. consultant reports). It does not apply to unconvertible information and information that the Municipality does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

Each publication should be produced in such a way as to reduce barriers in the original document. Adaptation to another format can be accommodated easily and quickly when accessibility is considered during the development.

## Procedure Description

### Notification

The Municipality will advise the public of the availability of accessible formats and communications supports.

The Municipality will include:

- The line "Accessible formats and communication supports are available, upon request," is placed at the bottom front page of: all council and committee agenda indexes;
- Large-scale documents for Municipal-wide public consultation (such as the Budget Overview or the Official Plan);
- All documentation available for Municipal-wide public consultation, including Council and committee agenda report; and, anywhere else the Municipality determines that notification is reasonable.

## **Processing Requests**

Requests for an accessible format or communication support can be received by staff in person, by phone/TTY or by electronic formats such as emails or service requests. Upon receipt of a request, staff will complete the Online Request Form (Appendix A) which is forwarded to the Municipality for record keeping purposes. The request is to be responded to by the appropriate operational staff.

All Municipal staff shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication 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.

## **Timeframe**

The timeframe for the conversion process of a document into an accessible format, or the provision of a communication support, can vary depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents, and the number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.

If the document being requested is the subject of a public consultation or has a set timeframe for public comment, the timeframe for document conversion and distribution must be taken into consideration.

## **Cost of Conversion**

When a member of the public requests a Municipal document in an accessible format or information with a communication support, the department of origin is responsible for the cost of conversion, materials and distribution of information. If the materials are directly related to the work of an Advisory Committee, costs will be the responsibility of the Clerks department.

Once the appropriate format or support is determined with the requestor, staff shall provide or arrange for the provision of the accessible formats and/or communication support for persons with disabilities.

If a staff member determines that information is unconvertible, they shall, in consultation with their manager, provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- (a) a written explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and,
- (b) a summary of the unconvertible information or communication.

The Municipal Office is available for consultation to help determine if information can be converted.

## **Monitoring/Contraventions**

Supervisors and managers shall monitor current practices to ensure compliance.

Failure to comply with the AODA regulations can result in Provincial administrative penalties and failure to comply with this procedure may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## References

Municipality of Powassan Accessibility Policy  
Human Resources Policy  
Legislative and Administrative Authorities  
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11  
Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, O. Reg. 429/07  
Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11  
Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19

## Responsibilities

### **Municipal Office is responsible for:**

- Collecting information about requests from departments;
- Monitoring compliance with this procedure on an annual basis.

### **Administrators are responsible for:**

- Creating and maintaining service free from discrimination toward persons with disabilities;
- Budgeting for the costs associated with accessible formats and communication supports of materials originating from their departments;

Monitoring situations where requests for accessible formats and communication supports have not been provided and determine ways to make the information more convertible in the future.

### **Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:**

- Creating and maintaining service free from discrimination toward persons with disabilities;
- Ensuring employees are aware of this procedure and are logging requests that are received by their departments, through the online form;
- Tracking costs associated with requests;
- Ensuring employees are providing residents with the requested accessible format and communication support;
- Ensuring that staff provide residents with an explanation as to why information or communications are unconvertible; and,
- Overseeing the provision of a summary of the unconvertible information or communication support to the resident.

## Definitions

Accessible formats - may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

## Common accessible formats

Some of the most common accessible formats are (but not limited to):

- HTML or electronic text version on line that meet the WCAG 2.0 level A or AA;
- Text saved as a Word document;
- Large Text;
- Plain language versions;
- Braille.

Common communication supports are (but not limited to):

- Verbal explanation of a written document
- Video Captioning, transcripts
- Sign language interpretation
- See attached Guidelines for Communicating with People who have Disabilities (Appendix B) for more information.

Communications - means the interaction between two or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided, sent or received.

Communication supports - may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

Conversion ready - means an electronic or digital format that facilitates conversion into an accessible format.

Electronic Text – 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.

Information - includes data, facts and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital or images, and that conveys meaning. The information and communications standards do not apply to the following:

1. Products and product labels
2. Unconvertible information or communications
3. Information that the Municipality does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship

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

## **Enquiries**

For additional information please contact the Municipal Office at 705-724-2813 or e-mail: [info@powassan.net](mailto:info@powassan.net)

# Accessibility Training for Customer Service Guidelines

## Guidelines for Communicating with People who have Disabilities

The following information is provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (Province of Ontario)

### Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing

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

Here are suggested ways to best communicate with a person who has hearing loss:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. For example, try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- Don't shout.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where your customer can see your face.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.

### Vision loss

Did you know that few people who are blind have no vision? According to Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), nine out of ten people who use their services have some degree of vision.

Three million Canadians have difficulty reading conventional text.

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read signs, locate landmarks, or see hazards. Some customers 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 readers which read information to them from an accessible document or an accessible website.

- Do not assume the individual can't see you.
- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him or her.
- Offer your elbow to guide the person. If they accept, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment around them.

- If you are given directions or providing any information, be precise and descriptive. For example, if you're approaching a door, stairs or an obstacle, say so.
- Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Guide them to a chair or a comfortable location. Do not walk away without saying good-bye and let them know what to expect next.
- Offer to communicate pertinent information through email or links to websites where they can find more information.

## **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.

Keep these suggestions in mind when you serve a customer who is deafblind:

- Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor.
- Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach your customer who is deafblind.
- A customer 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 just learn differently. Learning disabilities affect people from all backgrounds and are not caused by culture, language or a lack of motivation.

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 in your customer service interaction when the person has difficulty reading material or taking in and processing the information you are providing.

Some tips:

- 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 customer. For example, keep a pen and paper handy. That way, you can explain, and then review and repeat the information using your notes.
- If you are discussing confidential information, consider giving the notes to your customer or offering to destroy them.
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide for your customers.

## **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.

An example of a developmental disability would be Down Syndrome.

Here's some guidance:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language.
- Make sure your customer understands what you've said. You can be direct and 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 may want to ask if the information needs to be repeated.

### **Mental Health Disabilities**

The important thing to remember when communicating with a person who has a mental health disability is to focus on completing the transaction in a calm, patient way and meeting the customer's needs. Mental health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember. Mental health disability is a broad classification for many disorders that can range in severity. Customers may experience anxiety due to phobias or panic disorders. Hallucinations, mood swings, and a deep lack of motivation may be signs of a mental health disability. A person may have a clinical depression or bipolar disorder.

The major barrier for people with mental health disabilities is the stigma associated with it and the lack of understanding.

Here are some suggestions:

- Be confident and reassuring. As with all customers, listen carefully and focus on meeting the customer's needs.
- If the person appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- If a customer appears to show signs of a mental health disability, it may be helpful to keep in mind that the customer's reactions are not connected to you personally, as a service provider. The customer may simply be showing symptoms of mental illness.
- Did you know that one in five people in Ontario will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives?

### **Speech or Language Disabilities**

Some customers may have problems communicating because of their disability. 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.

A few pointers...

- Do not assume that just because a person has this disability they also have another.

- Give your customer 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 customer's sentences. Give them time to finish.

## **Physical Disabilities**

Physical disabilities can result from many different situations, for example: Cerebral palsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations.

Here are some tips:

- A person with a physical disability may not need assistance to verbally communicate, but may need other types of assistance to be served.
- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- They may ask you to assist with reaching items for them or securing paperwork in a bag for them.
- Inform your customer of the accessible features in the immediate environment (automatic doors, lowered counters, accessible washrooms, elevators, ramps, etc.).
- Respect your customer's personal space. Don't lean over them or on an assistive device.
- Do not move items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach.
- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to make sure your customer is ready to be moved and that you describe what you are going to do beforehand. Don't leave the individual in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

### ***Ways to make information accessible:***

***Keeping your text as clear and as easy to read as possible is not only beneficial for clients 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.***

**American Sign Language (ASL) and French Sign Language (LSQ):** ASL and LSQ uses hand shapes, positions, facial expressions and body movements to convey meaning to people who are Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.

**Large Print:** the minimum suggested font size is point size 12 however someone with low vision may request up to 48 point font in order to read the information.

**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.

**Transcriptions:** the conversion of speech into a written or electronic text document.

**Verbal or Written Descriptions:** verbal or written explanation of a document or picture.

**Reading Software for websites (BrowseAldoud):** a free software available online that reads web pages out loud. It can help anyone who has difficulty reading online, including people with mild visual impairments, low literacy, English as a second language, or learning disabilities such as dyslexia.



**Screen Reader Software:** screen readers use a speech-synthesizer to read text from computer screen or convert it to Braille. For readers to work, the information must be formatted properly (in a structured electronic file) for the screen reader to recognize it.

**Captioning:** the provision of words, in a written format, that accompanies spoken words in a video. It usually appears on the bottom of the screen.

**Digital Accessible Information Systems: (DAISY):** is an audio format for people who have trouble with print – including limited vision and learning disabilities like dyslexia. Daisy digital talking books are like audiobooks, but include navigation features to help readers skip forward or back through the material.

**Structured Electronic Files:** include information about how elements of the document are formatted, like titles, section headings, etc. These files can be created using “styles” in most standard word processing programs. Documents created as structured electronic files are easier to convert to accessible formats (including Braille, Daisy an web pages) and allow screen readers to navigate the information effectively.

**Tactile Signage:** tactile means “understood through sense of touch”. Characters and pictograms are raised 0.8 to 1.5 mm above the surface, and have Grade 1 Braille located directly below the associated pictograph or large text.

# Resources for Accessible Formats and Communications Supports

The following is a list resources used 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.

**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.

**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.

**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 .

**Assistive Listening Devices (FM Loop system):** is 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:** many video production companies provide video captioning as an additional service. It is important to include this criterion when ordering the development of videos.

For additional information please contact the Municipal Office at 705-724-2813 or e-mail: [info@powassan.net](mailto:info@powassan.net).