

ACCESSIBILITY: INTERACTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH CLIENTS WHO ARE DEAFBLIND

POLICY:

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

PREAMBLE:

A person who is deafblind can neither see nor hear to some degree. This results in difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating.

DEFINITIONS:

Assistive Device:

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 deafblind:

- Hearing aid
- Paper and pen
- Personal amplification device (e.g. pocket talker)
- Phone amplifier
- Relay service
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Hearing ear dog, guide dog for the blind
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter
- White cane

GUIDELINES:

- Attract the person'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 the 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, e.g. 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)*.