

## **ACCESSIBILITY: INTERACTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH CLIENTS WHO HAVE PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

### **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:**

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing, walking or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

#### **Assistive Devices:**

Assistive devices include a range of devices or supports that a person with a physical disability may use and include the following:

- Elevator
- Mobility device (e.g. wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
- Personal oxygen tank
- Support person

### **GUIDELINES:**

- Speak naturally and directly to your client/patient, not to his/her companion or support person
- If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone in a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so that you can make eye contact
- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things
- Respect your client/patient's personal space. Do not lean over him/her or on his/her assistive device
- Don't move items or equipment such as canes and walkers out of the person's reach
- Don't touch assistive devices without permission. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:
  - Wait for and follow the person's instructions
  - Confirm that your client/patient is ready to move
  - Describe what you're going to do before you do it
  - Avoid uneven ground and objects
  - Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous, or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors
- Let your client/patient know about accessible features in the immediate area (e.g. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, ramps, etc.)

### **REFERENCES:**

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*