

Communication Access – Using a Communication Assistant

Description

A communication assistant is a person who helps interpret another person's communication. They may help someone who struggles to talk, hear and/or understand.

A family member, friend or support staff member may assist during daily activities. A qualified, neutral interpreter or communication assistant is recommended in more personal conversations or complex medical situations, including those that involve a person's legal rights, personal safety, decision-making, designation of care, consent to medical procedures, or medical assistance in death the person, a qualified, neutral interpreter or communication assistant is encouraged.

Benefit

This strategy supports all aspects of communication. Since people with communication disorders are at increased risk of being inaccurately deemed incompetent and experiencing bullying, neglect or abuse it is important to consider accessing a communication assistant when a person doesn't have an adequate method of communication.

Tips:

- Respect the person's privacy, safety and autonomy by assisting them in identifying an appropriate communication assistant. Remember that the person may not feel comfortable or safe sharing personal information with a family member, friend or caseworker.
- Always confirm that the person who accompanies an individual is authorized to assist them with communication.
- Once you have confirmed the role, accept the person's messages as conveyed to you by the assistant.
- Speak directly to the individual, not to the assistant.
- Observe to ensure that the person is communicating with the assistant, and approving their messages.
- If you are unsure about a message, ask the person "Is that what you wanted to communicate?"



Note: Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC) provides online training for people who provide communication assistance and has a database of people who are available on an ad hoc basis to provide communication assistance.

(Adapted from CDAC resources with permission)



COMMUNICATION ACCESS

