

# Communicating With People Who Have Difficulty Understanding

<b>Show respect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at and talk directly to the person, not someone who accompanies them</li> <li>• Don't underestimate their ability to understand, participate and make decisions</li> <li>• Confirm whether they want someone with them to assist them to communicate</li> </ul>
<b>Identify needs &amp; supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the person's whiteboard and other tools to ensure that all health care providers are aware of their needs and how to support communication</li> <li>• Consider posting the Hearing symbol if the person has a hearing loss</li> </ul>
<b>Ask how</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask what you can do to help the person to understand you</li> <li>• Ask and observe what family and friends do to improve communication</li> </ul>
<b>Provide the basics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whenever possible have the person wear their hearing aids and/or glasses</li> <li>• Consider a personal amplification device if hearing aids are needed and cannot be worn (e.g., Pocket Talker)</li> <li>• If English is not the person's first language contact <a href="#">AHS Interpretation &amp; Translation Services</a>. For an American Sign Language interpreter call 403-284-6203 during business hours or 403-229-6939, after hours</li> </ul>
<b>Gain attention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to the person's physical level, make eye contact and say 'hello'</li> <li>• Call the person's name, gently touch their arm or turn on the light to get their attention before talking</li> <li>• Reduce background noise – turn off the TV, music, fans and any unnecessary equipment or move to a quieter location</li> </ul>
<b>Take time to save time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait for the person to process information and respond</li> <li>• People are usually less anxious and more cooperative when they understand and are able to express their thoughts, feelings and preferences</li> </ul>
<b>Highlight important messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use shorter sentences and avoid jargon</li> <li>• Speak slowly and clearly, emphasizing important words</li> <li>• Add facial expressions and gestures</li> <li>• Write key words, line drawings, or symbols as you talk</li> <li>• Keep a notepad, whiteboard, boogie board or tablet handy</li> </ul>
<b>Repeat or rephrase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rephrase or repeat information when it is not understood</li> <li>• Wait 5 -10 seconds before rephrasing or repeating</li> <li>• Talking very loudly does not help the person</li> </ul>
<b>Check understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that the person has heard and understands everything you say by having them repeat it back to you</li> <li>• If they are not able to repeat or rephrase, confirm understanding by using visuals or asking simple questions</li> </ul>
<b>Access available resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For more information, visit the Communication Access page on <a href="#">MyHealthAB.ca</a>, talk to an audiologist or speech-language pathologist, or contact <a href="mailto:practice.consultation@ahs.ca">practice.consultation@ahs.ca</a></li> </ul>

