

# Communicating with People Who Have Difficulty With Expressive Language

<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 Communication Access and/or Hearing symbol(s)</li> </ul>
<b>Ask how</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the person how they best communicate and what you can do to help</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 ensure that the person can access glasses, personal hearing devices and communication tools, boards and devices</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>• Let the person finish their message</li> <li>• Don't guess unless they give you permission to do so</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>Provide choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide choices – have them point to pictures or words</li> <li>• Anticipate what they might need or want to tell you</li> <li>• Confirm what they want by asking yes/no questions and giving choices</li> </ul>
<b>Ask about support for communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A family member, friend or support staff member may assist during daily activities with the person's consent</li> <li>• A qualified, neutral interpreter or communication assistant is recommended in personal conversations or complex medical situations, especially when they involve a person's legal rights, personal safety, decision-making, designation of care, consent to medical procedures, or medical assistance</li> </ul>
<b>Use tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try using rating scales, picture/topic boards or alphabet boards to assist the person to communicate thoughts, needs, preferences and decision</li> <li>• Consider whether the person can use a pen/paper, boogie boards, keyboard (iPad) or other device</li> <li>• Keep these tools handy at all times</li> </ul>
<b>Confirm understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the person if you don't understand their message</li> <li>• Check to make sure the person understood your message</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="http://MyHealthAB.ca">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> <li>• If English isn't 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>

