

Communicating with a person who has a communication disability

Although everyone is different, here are some general tips for making your services accessible for people with speech and language disabilities.

Be Friendly

- Talk directly to us not to the person with us
- Do not underestimate our abilities
- Be patient

Communicating

- Ask: “Is there anything I should do when we are communicating?”
- Listen and watch when we communicate using whatever methods we choose. For example, unclear speech; writing; pointing to objects; pictures; spelling out words; answer Yes and No questions; typing on a device
- Follow any communication instructions we give you
- Make an effort to understand what we are communicating
- Repeat back what we communicated, so we know you understand what we are communicating
- Tell us when you don’t understand and we will find another way
- Give us opportunities and time to communicate our own thoughts, not just answer your questions
- Find a quiet place to communicate, free of distractions

Understanding

- Remember that most of us understand what you say
- If we do have difficulty understanding, use everyday language; speak clearly; use short sentences; show us or write down what you are talking about

Communication Assistance

- In essential services (e.g. a hospital or court setting) we may require someone to assist with communication. The organization may be required to find a trained person and pay for their services.

Reading

- Make your written materials, website and social media clear and easy to read and navigate. Ask if we need alternate formats or assistance to read and understand documents.

Writing

- Make your forms, surveys and order forms easy to complete. Ask us if we need accommodations to take notes or sign documents.

Telephone

- Ask how we want to communicate with you over the telephone. We may want to use speech, a device or a person to assist us or we might prefer to use text, fax, TTY, relay services or email.