



## Are you able to provide the following supports to clients with communication disabilities?

- Techniques to support them in understanding what you are saying
- Strategies to ensure they can communicate effectively with you
- Procedures and alternative options for them to communicate over the telephone
- Guidelines for obtaining and using a communication assistant
- A process to record non-verbal communications, evidence and testimony
- Accessible print, text and e-communications
- Writing support for note taking, forms and signatures

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[www.access-to-justice.org](http://www.access-to-justice.org)

### Check the website for:

- Best practices
- Webinars
- Self-paced slide show with video segments and downloadable guidelines
- Resources and useful links
- Updated news on projects
- Roster of communication assistants across Canada

Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships Canada (ACCP) is a Canadian, non-profit organization that promotes communication accessibility for people with all types of communication disabilities.

See [www.accpc.ca](http://www.accpc.ca) for more accessibility resources in community contexts.

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**Communicating Matters**  
Augmentative Communication  
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## Access to Justice for People with Communication Disabilities

... one size does not fit all.



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## Recognizing a client who may have a communication disability

### When your client speaks, does he or she:

- Speak in a way that is hard for you to understand?
- Communicate messages in ways other than speech?
- Have difficulty finding the words he/she wants to say?

### When you speak, does your client:

- Look confused, look away or defer to someone to answer for them?
- Answer in ways that suggest they did not understand your question?
- Tell you that he or she does not understand what you are saying?

Going to see a lawyer is stressful for everyone, therefore responses to these questions do NOT necessarily indicate the presence of a communication disability. However, if there is a combination of communication issues, you and your client should take the time to investigate the reason(s).

Has your client informed you of a diagnosis that may impact on his or her communication? For example intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, autism, apraxia of speech, traumatic brain injury, stroke, brain tumor, neck cancer, aphasia, dementia, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, or Huntington's Disease.

## Communication disabilities are not the same

### Some disabilities affect:

- Speaking
- Understanding what someone is saying
- Both speaking and understanding

Most people who have difficulty speaking do not have a problem understanding what others are saying.

Some people with communication disabilities may also have challenges with reading and writing.

### Communication disabilities can be:

- Mild or severe
- Hidden or obvious

Hidden communication disabilities may result from previous injuries, concussions or early dementia. They may be subtle yet have a significant impact on a person's ability to process information and problem solve within a legal context.

### People can communicate using:

- Gestures, body language, vocalizations, speech, pictures, symbols, letter boards and speech generating devices.

Some people choose to use a communication assistant to support them communicating.

## Communication access is a legal right

### Clients with communication disabilities have a right to:

- Communicate about their situation, give and get information effectively and accurately
- Use a variety of ways to communicate
- Maintain full authorship of their communication
- Receive legal information in ways they understand and can access
- Have their testimony recorded in ways that protects the integrity of their communication

Effective communication occurs when two people understand each other.

