

Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships-Canada

April 2009

Our last newsletter went out to you in December 2007! In many ways, it feels like yesterday and yet lots has happened in between then and now. We thought it was time to take a breath and let you know what we have been doing. We always appreciate hearing from you and love suggestions on ways that we can work together on matters that are important for people who have communication disabilities.

Accessibility Standards



Jody Schloss communicating with her bank manager.

What are accessibility standards?

The Ontario Accessibility Directorate is developing accessibility standards for people with disabilities in Ontario. These standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to follow so that people with disabilities can use their services in the same way as people without disabilities.

There will be rules for transportation, employment, customer services and information and communications.

In April 2008, ACCPC was asked to advise the government's information and communications committee on the accessibility needs of people with communication disabilities.

What do the standards mean for people who use Augmentative Communication?

The standards will tell people what they have to do when someone who has a communication disability uses their services.

What can I expect to happen?

The customer standards are now the law in Ontario. You can find out about these by going to the Ontario Accessibility Directorate. The other standards are in the process of being developed and will soon become the law. The Information and Communication Standards has some good things for people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). For example, you can expect to be able to:

- use your preferred methods of communicating (e.g. speech,
- communication displays, devices, personal communication assistance etc.) when accessing community services;
- get the communication supports you need in order to communicate when using your services and businesses (e.g. time to communicate; respect for your privacy and ability to make decisions about your life; information in ways that you can use; etc.)
- use a communication assistant if you want;
- in some situations, have the organization negotiate, help locate and if necessary pay for a communication assistant if you don't have someone to assist you.
- get the communication supports you request when communicating over the telephone, signing documents etc.

Where can I get more information?

Go to the website of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario

Booklet on Communication Access

ACCPC has written a booklet for businesses and services about what they can do to make their services and businesses more accessible to people who have communication disabilities.

The booklet includes strategies that people can use when communicating with a person who uses a communication display, speech generating device, a communication assistant, sign language interpreter or deafblind intervenor.

The booklet will be available in May / June 2009 in English and French on the website of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario:

www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario

To get a printed copy of this booklet, please contact ServiceOntario at: www.ServiceOntario.ca. or call ServiceOntario at 1-866-515-2025

The booklet will also be available online at the ACCPC website: www.accpc.ca

Cultures of Communication

ACCPC is supporting a number of organizations in developing cultures of communication within their organization.



The communication team at London Participation House Support Services is working with ACCPC to develop a culture of communication within their organization.

A **Culture of Communication** means that communication supports and tools are naturally integrated into every part of a person's life. It means that no activity takes place without consideration being given to the inclusion of those who cannot communicate using speech alone and the tools and supports needed for this to happen.

ACCPC provides training over a 12 month period to organizations that support adults with communication disabilities.

See our website for more information on creating a culture of communication and our other workshops and courses.

Communication Assistants

We know that some people who use AAC, want funded, accredited communication assistant services. Based on our communication assistant project in 2007/08, we are in on-going negotiations with

Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services. Share your experiences and your specific need for communication assistants by writing to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

New Resource:

ACCPC has received a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop an online resource and booklet by and for people with communication disabilities about their communication rights and what they can do to ensure that their rights are respected. Nine people from Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto with communication disabilities will be involved in the development of these resources which should be available in 2010.

Sharing information

ACCPC has been busy presenting information from our various projects. In 2008, we were invited to give a pre-conference seminar on fostering self-directed services for people who use AAC at the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) in Montreal. We also presented on our communication assistant program and access to the justice system at the Rehab International conference in Quebec City. We co-authored sections of the September issue of AC News on communication access (www.augcominc.com) and have a number of publications in the works.

Donations

As most of you know, ACCPC has no core funding outside of its projects. That means we need money to continue to provide our resources free of charge on our website as well as to advise policy makers about the needs of people with communication disabilities.

ACCPC is now a registered charity. You can donate and support the work that we are doing. Please go to our website to find out how to make a donation to ACCPC.

Literacy Workshop

We are delighted to announce that Janice Light will be returning to Toronto to provide a fund raising a workshop for

ACCPC in the Fall 2009.



Janice Light is Distinguished Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the Pennsylvania State University.

Check our website in the next few months for more information or email us with your name and address so that you can be sure of hearing the details.



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