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For information on
Communication
Access Now:

<http://www.communication-access.org/>

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of you will be pleased to hear that we finally managed to change our name from Augmentative Communication Community Partnerships Canada (ACCPC) to Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC). We did this, not only to get a shorter name but because we wanted to include all people who have speech and / or language disabilities including people who may or may not use augmentative communication. The public tells us that our new name more clearly reflects what we do and the population we represent.

CDAC continues the work we started as ACCPC. We are a national, non-profit organization that promotes human rights, accessibility and inclusion for people with significant communication disabilities regardless of the type of disability they have or the communication method that they use. We are governed by a board of directors with representation across Canada. We have no core funding and receive most of our funds from national and provincial projects, product sales and fees for our services. While people who have communication disabilities are engaged in all CDAC projects, the professionals who work with us bring expertise from different sectors depending on the needs of each project.

The following is a brief summary of our current activities.

Communication Access Now!

Last year, we completed a three-year communication access project, funded through Social Development Partnerships Program – Disability Component. Following a national survey on the communication barriers and accessibility accommodations required by people with communication disabilities, we developed a series of online resources to educate businesses and organizations about ways to increase access to their goods and services for people with communication disabilities. The project highlighted the lack of awareness of accessibility requirements for people with communication disabilities; the core elements of communication access across communication disabilities and the need to reframe communication barriers within the context of human rights legislation.

This year, we are pleased to announce that we will be launching a national program to promote communication access. Lois Turner, Speech Language Pathologist, Vancouver, will be working with us on this important project. We are currently designing a national strategy to target key sectors such as policy makers, legislators, and essential services and developing resources that will be used throughout the campaign.

We invite everyone to participate in this project and we welcome your ideas. Check out our website and contact us via social media.

**Board of Directors
(2013/14):**

*Hazel Self, Al Cook,
Melinda Rundle, Joanna
Birenbaum, Harpreet
Bassi, Kathleen
Kennedy & Lynnette
Norris*

For more information
on Communication
Access to Justice:
<http://www.access-to-justice.org/>

For more information on
the Ontario AAC Mentor
Project:
<http://www.leadership.cdacanada.com/>

Communication Access to Justice

In 2012, with funding from the Department of Justice Canada, we completed a national feasibility study on the need for trained communication intermediaries to support people with communication disabilities when using police, legal and justice services. Over 50 key legal and disability organizations provided input to this study. In addition, we explored the communication intermediary services in the UK and existing service models in Canada for people who are Deaf, Deafblind and people who require language translation services. A summary of findings from this study is available at http://www.access-to-justice.org/p/feasibility_study

The study clearly illustrated the current inequity of access to police, legal and justice services for people with communication disabilities across Canada and highlighted the need for formal communication support services to assist people communicating in these situations.

At this time, we are working with Justice Canada to implement a national and provincial model to establish communication intermediary services in Canada. A communication intermediary is a speech language pathologist who has extra training to assist people with communication disabilities in a legal or justice context. Over the next few months, we will be developing national standards of practice and piloting training for communication intermediaries in Ontario. We will also be educating police, lawyers, and justice professionals on how and when to engage these services. In addition, we will continue to consult with legal and disability groups across Canada on ways to collaborate and roll out intermediary services on provincial and regional levels.

We are pleased to have Pamela Cross, Lawyer and Elyse Shumway, Speech Language Pathologist, working with us on this project.

Please contact us if you are interested in setting up these services in your province or if you are a Speech Language Pathologist in Ontario who would like to attend the training.

Ontario AAC Mentor Project

In July 2012, the Ontario Trillium Foundation funded us to provide a leadership / mentor program for people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). The project aims to increase employment and / or volunteer opportunities for people who use AAC by training them as mentors in the field of AAC. We developed six online training modules. Three of the modules are adapted from the successful Mentorship Project developed by Janice Light and David McNaughton at Penn State University. We added new modules on communication rights, making presentations and participating on committees.

Ten Ontarians who use AAC have successfully completed the course. They are now entering the second phase in their training in which they are provided with a guided, online work experience as they mentor a youth who uses AAC; assist a family of a child who uses AAC, inform a clinician about making services accessible or educate a student in the disability field about the lived experience of using AAC. On successful completion of their training, we will work with the AAC mentors to market their new job skills to the AAC and disability communities.

Tracy Shepherd and Toni Southern, Speech Language Pathologists, are working with us on this project.

Cultures of Communication

Our Creating Cultures of Communication training is a 12-16 month training program for organizations that support adults with intellectual disabilities. This year, Laurel Robinson is delivering the training to London Participation Support Services and Tracy Shepherd has just started to provide the program for Lambton County Developmental Services. This is a systemic, sustainable program, based on communication standards of practice that we have developed with and for this sector. We hope to extend this program to other organizations in Ontario and across Canada.

Please contact us if you know an organization that might be interested in this fee for service training.

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Advocacy

As always, CDAC makes every effort to respond to issues of significance for people with communication disabilities. We continue to advocate on initiatives regarding the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). As much as possible, we participate in consultations at national and provincial levels and we frequently meet with government ministers, policy analysts and committees about the needs and issues of people with communication disabilities.

**For more information on CDAC and our projects,
check out our website, visit us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.
We welcome your suggestions and participation.**