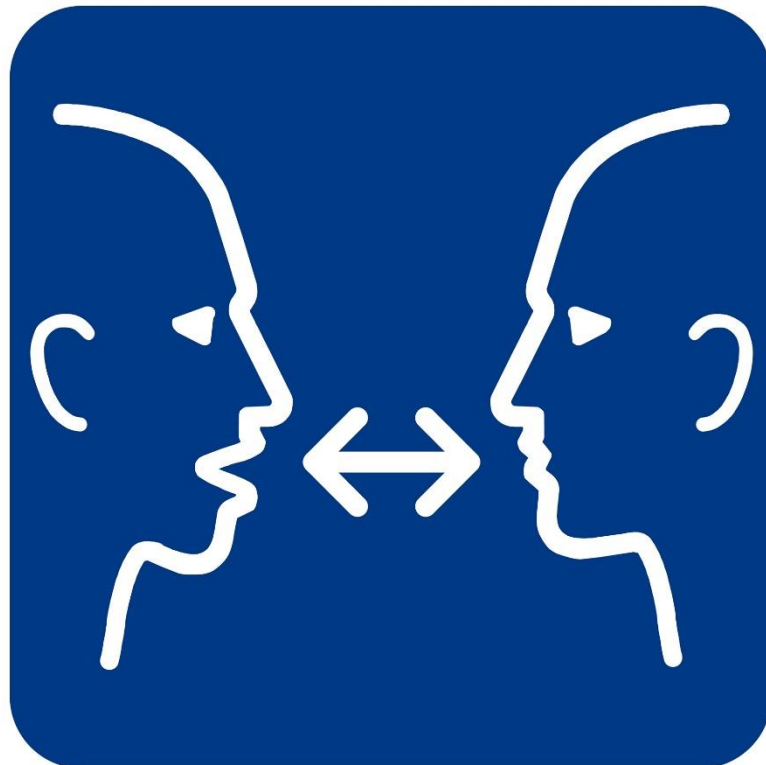




Communication Disabilities Access Canada

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



JUNE 6, 2019

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AN EXCITING YEAR

2018 was another productive year for Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC). We made a number of significant advances in promoting communication accessibility and social inclusion for Canadians who have speech, language and communication disabilities. Of specific note was CDAC's involvement in shaping the Accessible Canada Act and in getting an amendment to include communication recognized as a priority area in this ground-breaking legislation. We are hopeful that this sets the foundation for the development of meaningful standards and regulations that address accessibility for people with disabilities that affect their communication.

This year, we also developed and hosted a series of highly successful online trainings and resources that were used by over 2,000 people in Canada and internationally. This response far exceeded our expectations and clearly reflects the community's interest and appreciation for the work we are doing.

Our new website looks clean and easy to navigate and our social network has grown to 3,000. Visitors to our site tell us that they are now more aware of the scope of our resources in social justice and accessibility. Our database is beginning to take off and people are finding it a useful way to search for communication assistance in everyday situations and in police, legal and justice settings.

On behalf of our board of directors, I want to recognize and thank our CDAC team, under the direction of our Executive Director, Barbara Collier - Jason Jang, webmaster and technologist; Laure Prechonnet, French translator; Heidi Bigl, bookkeeper and Chevanne Simpson, administrative coordinator. And a big thank you to everyone who worked on our projects this year - Tony Diamanti, Anne Abbott, Farrah Sattaur, Dan Watson, Casey Morrison, Sarah Kilpack, Eva Miodonski, Christine Hunt, Sam Savona, Kevin Bolianatz, Diana Kinslikh, Shelley Deegan, Gabe Ly, Elyse Shumway and Sean Story. We could not have done this work without all of you.

Thank you to our project funders in 2018 – Social Development Partnerships Projects, Odette Family Foundation and The Law Society of Ontario.

We are especially grateful to the Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Accessibility, for including communication as a priority in our national Accessible Canada Act.

We hope you enjoy reading this brief summary about our activities in 2018.

Sincerely,



Chair of the CDAC Board of Directors



Hazel Self, Chair of CDAC Board of Directors.

ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

“We heard compelling testimony in committee that spoke to the impact of barriers to communication, particularly for persons with communication and language disabilities. This amendment prioritizes the barriers experienced by people with communication and language disabilities that can be caused by conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities. By making communication a priority in and of itself, we can guarantee a consistent, harmonized approach to addressing the barriers to accessibility faced by people with communication disabilities in every federally regulated sector.”

Hon. Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Nov. 2018

This year, CDAC continued to provide input to the federal government’s emerging accessibility legislation, Bill C-81. We did this independently as an organization as well as participating on the leadership team of the Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance (FALA). This alliance of 96 organizations was led by Spinal Cord Injury Canada. Other leadership team members included the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Canadian Association of the Deaf, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Native Women’s Association of Canada, and BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society.

In October 2018, CDAC was invited to appear before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We were successful in having the draft bill amended to include communication as a priority accessibility area.



Photo of The Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility and Barbara Collier, CDAC at the National Disability Summit, May 2019

In April 2019, CDAC was invited to present to the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. At that time, we endorsed the recommendations put forward by the Arch Disability Law Centre, the Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance and the AODA Alliance and focused our presentation on the need for clarification of the term communication. Our proposed definition was to recognize communication as meaning *a two-way, interactive process in which people give and receive information, using a range of communication methods in face-to-face interactions, over the telephone, online and via reading and writing.* We also requested a human rights statement to be added to the principles section that recognizes that *“all persons have the right to communicate using their preferred communication method(s) and supports, which includes speech, writing, picture, symbol and letter boards, speech-generating devices and human services such as ASL/LSQ/ISL interpreting, captioning in real time, informal and formal communication assistance.”*

While supporting the need for communication access, we were disappointed that the Senate Committee did not include our proposed amendments.

On May 13, 2019, the Bill passed third reading in the Senate. During that debate, Senator Munson, as the Senator leading the Bill, referenced CDAC's testimony by highlighting the range of disabilities that can affect communication.

This was followed by a presentation by Senator Dean on the need for this legislation to meaningfully address accessibility for people with speech, language and communication disabilities. Senator Dean acknowledged the work done by CDAC in shaping the Accessible Canada Act and proposed the following action:



Photo of Senator Munson wearing the communication access symbol April 2019

“I would like to urge the Government to ensure someone with a disability that affects communication be considered as a member of the Board in order to be inclusive of all Canadians living with disabilities. Their contributions would greatly benefit the 500,000 people living with speech and language difficulties and ensure that no one is left behind.”

Senator Tony Dean
Address to the Senate, May 13, 2019

In preparation for the Accessible Canada Act, CDAC provided input to draft technical regulations put forward by the government's Accessibility Secretariat on penalties and reporting procedures. We also provided feedback on the government's Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations and worked with two potential candidates who are applying to be board members on the future Canadian Accessibility Standards Organization.

Throughout the parliamentary process, CDAC met regularly with Minister Qualtrough, the Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance and the Accessibility Secretariat and shared information with our stakeholders via social media.

References

- Brief to HUMA standing committee: https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CDAC_Presentation_to_HUMA_2018_Oct_22.pdf
- Brief to Senate: <https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Standing-Senate-Committee.pdf>
- Video presentation to Senate: <https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/videos/SOCI%20meeting%20no.%20134%20103203.mp4>
- Senator Munson and Senator Dean's presentations: <https://www.cdacanada.com/news/>
- Accessible Transportation for Persons with Disabilities Regulations at [2019/03/Transportation-Regulations.pdf](https://www.cdacanada.com/news/2019/03/Transportation-Regulations.pdf)

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

In 2018, CDAC was invited to participate on Ontario's Healthcare Standards Committee. This committee, headed by Sandi Bell, is comprised of members of the disability community and the healthcare sector. The mandate of the committee is to develop a new accessible Health Care Standard as required by Section 9 of the AODA. The work of this committee has been on hold due to a change in government and is to be reinstated in 2019. As part of that committee, we headed up a small group to develop a glossary of terms and common language that the committee could use to navigate communication access within the healthcare system.

In December 2018, we submitted a brief to the Honorable David Onley as part of the province's third review of the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). In our report, we highlighted a number of gaps and made recommendations for improved accessibility for people who have disabilities that affect communication.



Photo of Hazel Self, Chair of CDAC Board of Directors, Sarah Kilpack, Communication Assistant; Barbara Collier, Director of CDAC; Anne Abbott, Board Member CDAC and The Hon. Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility (2019)

On April 25, 2019, CDAC met with the Hon. Raymond Cho, Minister for Seniors and Accessibility in Ontario. We discussed the need to include people who have disabilities that affect communication on all accessibility standard development committees; to sustain communication assistant trainings and promote the communication assistance database, and to distribute our communication access webinar and guidelines with Ontario businesses and organizations.

References

- Healthcare glossary at <https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/access-to-healthcare/about/glossary/>
- Report on third review of AODA: <https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Brief-to-Hon.-Mr.-Onley-Review-of-AODA-2018.pdf>
- Letter to Minister Cho is available at https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Letter-to-Minister-Cho_2019-Jan-29.pdf

COMMUNICATION ACCESS TO JUSTICE

“Communication Intermediary services are essential if the criminal justice system is to become accessible for people with communication disabilities. At this time, justice professionals and people with speech and language disabilities need information about how and when to engage communication intermediaries.”

The Hon. Mr. Justice James R. Turnbull
Regional Senior Justice
Superior Court of Justice

With funding from the Odette Family Foundation, this year we established a database of communication intermediaries in Canada. The database is a place where people can search for a Communication Intermediary to support a victim, witness or accused person when communicating in critical situations such as police, legal and justice situations. All communication intermediaries are Speech-Language Pathologists and have attended online training from CDAC. There are currently 250 communication intermediaries on our database and we promoted the database to 408 justice organizations, and 296 disability organizations.

We provided presentations to the Ontario Provincial Police and the Law Society of Ontario. We also hosted webinars and information on our new website.

In April 2019, Barbara Collier met with Catalina Devandas Aguilar, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to discuss the need for communication intermediaries to assist people communicating in police, legal and justice situations.

In 2019, we had 45 inquiries about communication intermediary services and we are aware of 7 engagements in police interviews, legal meetings and courts. It should be noted that intermediaries and justice professionals do not have to report intermediary activities to CDAC and therefore the numbers do not necessarily reflect what is happening across the country.



Barbara Collier, CDAC with [Catalina Devandas Aguilar](#) UN Special Rapporteur

References

- Communication Intermediary database: <https://www.cdacanada.com/communication-assistance-database/>
- Information on engagement of intermediaries: <https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/communication-assistance-database/communication-assistant-database/using-the-database/>

ONLINE TRAININGS

Our online trainings were funded via a grant from Social Development Partnerships Projects – Disability Component (July 2017 - May 31, 2019).

We developed three online courses about (a) providing communication assistance; (b) working with a communication assistant and (c) making services accessible for people with communication disabilities. In addition, we developed a database of communication assistants who are available to provide assistance to people in everyday, non-critical situations.

All of our courses were presented by instructors who have disabilities that affect their communication, as well as people who provide communication assistance. The courses were presented on a learning management system that allowed people to register, select, navigate the courses, complete quizzes and obtain certificates of attendance. The courses were provided in English and French and included videos, audio, slides, transcripts that were fully accessible. Feedback surveys were provided for all lessons and courses. All courses were monitored, and people had opportunities to ask questions and request assistance via email.

Over **2,300** people registered to take these trainings. This response far exceeded our expectations and reflects the high interest in the subject matter. While not everyone who registered took or completed the courses, the number of registrations reflects a high interest in the topic areas.

COMMUNICATION ASSISTANCE COURSE

Prior to the development of a training curriculum, CDAC spent time getting input from people who have disabilities that affect their communication, their families and support service providers to define the role of a communication assistant. Our definition of a communication assistant is described as a person who supports an individual communicating in everyday, non-critical situations, in order to communicate as accurately and as authentically as possible. A communication assistant may assist a person understanding what others are saying, as well as to express what they want to communicate using their preferred method of communication. Just as important as describing what an assistant does, it was important to define the limits of their training. For example, a communication assistant, as trained by CDAC, cannot conduct communication assessments, provide therapy or recommend augmentative communication methods and devices; cannot support a person communicating in critical situations such as police, legal and justice settings and cannot provide assistance to an individual who has no formal communication method. In these situations, a referral to a Speech-Language Pathologist, a Communication Intermediary or an Augmentative Communication Clinic is required. We also distinguish the work of a communication assistant from the work of a communication health assistant or a communication disorders assistant who work in clinical situations under the supervision of Speech-Language Pathologists.

To support people in learning ways to support people communicating, we developed six, 30-minute lessons. The lessons included information about people who have communication disabilities; ways to facilitate people to communicate their messages; ways to facilitate people to understand what others are saying; strategies for facilitating successful interactions; tips for facilitating communication at meetings and information about ways to apply to be on the Communication Assistance Database.

The target audiences included people working in the disability sector as personal attendants, direct service providers, students in a disability field, as well as family members. The course was promoted to over 230 disability organizations; 250 Speech-Language Pathologists; 12 speech-language pathology colleges; and 10 personal support worker colleges. In addition, the courses were promoted to national and provincial Speech-Language Pathology Associations and Augmentative and Alternative Communication groups and

clinics across the country. Communication clinicians were requested to share the course information with their clients and their families and support staff.

Outcomes included:

- 1,310 people took this course
- 364 people obtained a certificate of completion
- Participants came from all provinces, except Prince Edward Island, Nunavut and Yukon
- 686 participants attended from outside Canada
- The majority of participants described themselves as a person who works in the disability sector, a personal support worker or direct service provider, a student in disability area, a clinician, or a family member.

Ninety-nine percent of the participants rated their satisfaction with the content and the format as satisfied or very satisfied.

In a survey conducted two months after the project ended, in which 106 people responded:

- 90% reported using the information they learned in the course in everyday or occasional interactions
- 100% rated the information as very useful.

Selected Testimonials

"I now ensure that during meetings, I ask if the person needs anything to make it easier to understand or contribute to the meeting. I try to send out agenda beforehand, and if not, allow time for the person to review it and prepare any messages. I ensure that the person is included and has time to both process and create any messages, and regularly seek input about their needs during a meeting- are we going too fast? Are they understanding? Do they need a moment to think or respond? Is it too noisy? etc. I also try to send the person home with a summary of sorts, that can be shared if the person chooses."

"I was working with a nonverbal person, usually, the person uses text to speech technology. However, for a while, her equipment had broken. I had never had the chance to work with someone using an alphabet board, or gotten the training. Luckily, this happened after I had taken this course and she was able to participate in the group discussion fully."

"Over a series of 5-6 appointments with a psychologist, I assisted a minimally speaking, apraxic/autistic individual to communicate in a psycho-educational assessment. With assistance, he achieved superior marks. Without appropriate assistance, this individual would not have been able to complete the testing to the best of his cognitive ability, which would have resulted in very, very different test results!"

"I liked the videos with people with disabilities communicating in different ways. It's great to see examples of communication methods that I haven't seen in real life before. It's also helpful to watch and learn from the experienced assistants in the videos as well."

References

- Communication Assistance Course: <https://courses.cdacanada.com/courses/communication-assistance/>

WORKING WITH A COMMUNICATION ASSISTANT

CDAC developed an online course for individuals who have communication disabilities and who want someone to assist them communicating with people in their communities. The content of this course addressed communication access rights, the role of a communication assistant, finding, hiring and training a communication assistant and assistance in healthcare and justice situations. This course was needed because many people with communication disabilities have no formal training in how to work a communication assistant outside of a family member.

The course was promoted to over 100 Speech-Language Pathology associations and Augmentative and Alternative Communication clinics for sharing with clients and family members.

Outcomes included:

- 233 people registered for the course
- 186 people took the course
- 125 people obtained a certificate of completion
- Participants came from all provinces, with the exception of PEI, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon
- 93 participants attended from outside Canada
- The majority of participants described themselves as a person with a communication disability, or a person supporting an individual with a communication disability.

Ninety-eight percent of the participants rated their satisfaction with the content and the format as satisfied or very satisfied.

Selected Testimonials

“Very informative in learning about the needs for communication assistants and how to go about in working with them. It gives good general information for the person hiring one and working with them.”

“The individual who I am supporting in taking this course liked the way that the rights were described in a clear concise manner.”

“Great information as to why and when someone would want to use a family member or when they would want to use someone else to assist their communication.”

“I love that the videos and course are being done by people who have communication difficulties. They are the experts.”

“The individual who I am supporting in taking this course is happy to learn about how to use the database and the helpful tips on interviewing new communication assistants.”

“It was nice to see people with complex communication needs speak on their own behalf.”

Working with a communication assistant course at <https://courses.cdacanada.com/courses/working-with-a-communication-assistant/>

MAKING SERVICES ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

This webinar was developed for people who work in organizations and businesses that provide goods and services to the members of the public. It addresses ways to communicate with people who have communication disabilities in face-to-face or telephone interactions, as well as how to host accessible meetings, public events and provide written information in ways that people can access. We also developed an e-booklet with guidelines on how to make services and meetings accessible for people with disabilities that affect communication.

The webinar was promoted to 100 government groups and public agencies, including federal and provincial groups addressing disability issues, seniors, justice, healthcare, public safety, transportation and financial services.

Outcomes included:

- 447 people registered for the course
- 333 people took the course
- 264 people obtained a certificate of completion
- Participants came from all provinces, except Newfoundland and Labrador, PEI, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon
- 165 participants attended from outside Canada
- The majority of participants described themselves as a person who works in a business, private or public sector, student in a disability field and a person who works in disability sector.
- Negotiations are in progress with Service Canada to use the webinar in their staff training for 5K employees.

Ninety-seven percent of the participants rated their satisfaction with the content and the format as satisfied or very satisfied.

Selected Testimonials:

"I liked hearing the information from the people with communication disabilities and what they would like to see from our service. I learned about the database and the communication symbol as well as realistic and simple ways that our service can be more accessible."

"The information was presented clearly, in an easy-to-follow manner and with the expertise of people with communication disabilities highlighting the messages. This is such an amazing online course."

"I found it very effective that you have people who have difficulties communicating providing this training, very engaging and it will stay in my mind."

"Every government agency should promote service to people with communication disability."

Webinar on Making Services Accessible for people with communication disabilities at <https://courses.cdacanada.com/courses/making-your-services-accessible-for-people-with-communication-disabilities/>

COMMUNICATION ASSISTANCE DATABASE

An online database was developed. Participants who successfully completed the online course and quiz, and wanted to be listed on the database, agreed to follow a code of ethics. Three hundred applications were made to the communication assistance database. There are communication assistants in all provinces and territories with the exception of Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. People requiring communication assistance can search the database using their postal code, the communication methods supported, language and age of person requiring support. An automated, private message is sent to an assistant by the person seeking their support. The assistant can then negotiate engagement via email or telephone.

People looking for an assistant on the database are cautioned that the assistants listed on the database are not affiliated with CDAC and work independently; that CDAC does not endorse assistants listed, or pay for communication assistance services, and that if the person is looking for communication services or assistance communicating in a critical healthcare situation, they should contact their provincial Speech Language Pathology Association, or local healthcare centre.

Communication assistance database and code of ethics:

<https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/accessible-businesses-and-services/communication-assistance-database/>

MOVING FORWARD

“Accessibility to services for people who have speech and language disabilities has been off the radar for too long! This isn’t about being nice – it’s about rights, equality and inclusion.”

Anne Abbott
CDAC Board Member

We are excited and optimistic that we may finally have our voices heard in the Accessible Canada Act. For that to happen we need your support. Check out our News section on our website, follow us on our social media, tell us what you are doing to increase awareness and let us know your thoughts on what needs to happen next.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for your support and contributions to CDAC over the past year. I want to especially thank our board members - Zoe Klein, Ann Sutton, Lynnette Norris, Anne Abbott, Audrey King, Krystine Donata, Judy Meintzer and Lynn Mitchell. A special thanks to Hazel Self, who continues to inspire and guide everything that we do and volunteers many hours to support our mission.

I look forward to working again with you in 2019/ 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara Collier Reg. CASLPO. F. ISAAC
Executive Director