



Communication Disabilities Access Canada

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Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
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COVID Patients who have Speech, Language and Communication Disabilities

The Need

Effective communication is essential in all healthcare situations. Over 165K Ontarians who have disabilities that affect communication are at high risk for not having the supports they need to communicate when accessing and receiving COVID treatments. In addition, a significant number of people who were previously able to speak, are now unable to communicate due to breathing problems and being on ventilators in Intensive Care Units.

Implications

Not being able to communicate can result in an inability:

- to access telephone hotlines and screening options
- to be understood when giving information at triage or when communicating about health status, needs and wants when hospitalized
- to give informed consent to treatment
- to communicate with loved ones during the healthcare process and especially at end-of-life.

COVID patients who cannot speak have a legal right to get supports they need to communicate during all phases of assessment and treatment related to COVID.

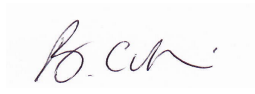
Recommendations

- Provide a separate hotline with a text option and interviewers who are familiar in how to communicate over the telephone with individuals who have disabilities, including people who have communication disabilities.

- Provide a clear directive to healthcare providers and triage teams that patients who have disabilities that affect their communication must:
 - Receive treatment based on their COVID status, regardless of their disability
 - Be allowed to have their trusted, familiar support persons assist them with communication
 - Have access to appropriate ways to communicate
- Create an exemption to isolation protocol to allow support people to assist individuals with personal and communication needs.
- Redeploy Speech-Language Pathologists and Augmentative Communication Clinicians to all COVID facilities to provide communication boards and assistance to patients on breathing support and ventilators.

We would be pleased to discuss these recommendations with you and support you in any way we can.

Yours sincerely,



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This letter is endorsed by the following organizations and individuals:

North Yorkers for Disabled Persons

Canadian Association for Community Living

Community Living Ontario

Centre for Independent Living in Toronto

Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy

Speech Audiology Canada

Blissymbolics Communication Institute – Canada

Aphasia Institute - The Pat Arato Aphasia Centre

David Shannon Law Office

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario

Income Security Advocacy Centre

Network of Women with Disabilities

Access Independent Living Services

Surry Place, Toronto

Arch Disability Law Centre

Spinal Cord Injury Canada

Individuals: Sandi Bell, Marianne Park, Melanie Marsden, Raj Chopra, Dr. John McDonald.