

Access to Justice

Do you have clients who have communications disabilities?

More than 350,000 people in Canada have communication disabilities that may affect one or more areas of speaking, understanding, reading and writing. Many people with limited or no speech use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems such as devices or letter, picture and symbol displays.

People who use AAC may need legal representation at some time in our lives. They may have a family law issue, have a discrimination case, be involved as a victim, witness or accused in criminal court, want to make a will or write a power of attorney.

Communication Access to Justice:

Effective communication in situations involving legal issues is critical for all of us. Like everyone else, people who use AAC have a right to expect to be able to:

- Communicate their situation, information and legal needs effectively and accurately
- Receive legal information in a way that is accessible for them
- Maintain full authorship of their communication
- Access spoken and print information

The legal community has an obligation to take whatever steps may be necessary to ensure that this happens, because without adequate processes and supports, people who use AAC do not have access to justice.

Clients who use AAC need access services about:

- Human Rights
- Abuse Issues
- Criminal Offences
- Discrimination
- Advocacy
- Inaccessible community services
- Health
- Counseling
- Income
- Trust funds
- Family Law
- Housing

Go to www.accpc.ca/equaljustice.htm to learn about:

- Communication barriers and supports
- Communicating with clients who use AAC
- Negotiating communication supports
- Using communication assistants
- Recognizing and using techniques that increase communication authenticity
- Recording nonverbal communication
- Giving information in accessible and usable ways
- Connecting with other organizations
- Evaluating your organization's communication accessibility features




Aaron Shelbourne uses his eyes to select items on his display.

Online Resources and Webinars
www.accpc.ca/equaljustice.htm

Resources for legal professionals, police, judges, legal aid clinics, jury members, legal education networks, victim witness services, counselors, shelter workers, disability advocates, people who use augmentative and alternative communication, their families and service providers.

Augmentative Communication
Community Partnerships
CANADA

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a blue sweater pointing at a computer screen. The screen displays a grid of characters, likely a spelling board. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Access to Justice For People who have Communication Disabilities

" Communication is a basic human need,
a basic human right.

And much more than this,
it is a **basic human power.**"

– Bob Williams, 2000

A photograph of a man wearing a blue and black plaid shirt, a black hat, and sunglasses. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. A speech-generating device is visible in the foreground, connected to his mouth by a tube.

*Donald Smith uses a speech generating device
to communicate.*

Front cover: Anne Abbott communicates by spelling words on her display.

ACCPC 
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For more information, please contact
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Free resources in English and French at:
www.accpc.ca/equaljustice.htm