

## Working with Persons who have Speech or Language Disabilities

Humber College is increasing accessibility for students with disabilities. Over 15.5% of people in Ontario have a disability. That means approximately 1 in every 7 Ontarians has a disability and as the population ages that number will continue to grow. This resource is intended to provide faculty and staff with suggestions to work more effectively with persons who have speech or language disabilities.

Some people have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

### Types of assistance a person with a speech or language disability may use include:

- Communication board
- Paper and pen
- Speech generating device
- Support person

Provided below are suggestions for interacting with persons who have speech or language disabilities to ensure they have equal access to goods and services at Humber College.

<b>Suggestions for Interacting with Persons who have Speech or Language Disabilities</b>
✓ Always ask, "How can I help you?" People with speech or language disabilities will tell you what they need.
✓ Just because a person has one disability does not mean that they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking, do not assume they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
✓ If you do not understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
✓ If possible, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'. Be patient and polite and give the person time to communicate their needs to you.
✓ Wait for the individual to finish speaking before you reply.
✓ Work with the individual to determine the best way to communicate.

**Source:** *Tips on Serving Customer with Disabilities*. Ontario Education Services Corporation <http://www.alcddb.on.ca/aboutus/pdf/accessibility/AccessibilityTipBooklet.pdf>.

*Understanding Disabilities*. Ministry of Social and Community Services.

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