

A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community
Emergency Planning and Response for People with Disabilities



Making Sure People with Communication Disabilities Get the Message

A Checklist for Emergency Public Information Officers

This document is part of a series created by Disability Alliance BC in order to help local Emergency Programs in British Columbia integrate the needs of people with disabilities into their emergency plans. The series was developed for the **A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community** project, based on key areas identified by local Emergency Programs.

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Disability Alliance BC



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Any information that is distributed and shared during an emergency should be accessible to people with communication disabilities. This resource will give you an overview of key concerns and solutions.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

WINDOWING

Windowing enables people who are deaf to read by means of a sign language interpreter what others hear in a video or broadcast. The interpreter appears in a corner or “window” in the screen translating spoken word to sign language. Windowing may include open or closed captioning.

CAPTIONING

Captioning translates the audio portion of a video or broadcast by way of subtitles/captions that usually appear on the bottom of the screen. It makes television programs and other visual media with sound accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen that is equipped with a device called a closed caption decoder. Open captions are “burned on” a video and appear whenever the video is shown.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH HEARING DISABILITIES

Although many people who are deaf and hard of hearing use email, pagers and text messaging to give and receive information, the teletypewriter (TTY) is still widely used. More cell phones are now compatible with TTY and hearing aids.

ELECTRONIC TEXT

Electronic text is used with screen reading software that enables people who are blind, have low-vision or who have learning disabilities to hear a spoken translation of information on the computer monitor.

LARGE PRINT

Large print enables people with visual disabilities to read printed materials you distribute. Use an easy to read font, such as Arial in a minimum of 14 point.

USING PLAIN LANGUAGE

DEFINITION OF PLAIN LANGUAGE

Plain language is writing designed to ensure the reader understands as quickly, easily and completely as possible. Plain language should be easy to read, understand and use.

PLAIN LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

- ✓ You may need to decide what is the key information and what can be left out.
- ✓ Try using the word order: subject, verb, object and avoid sentences that start with a supporting clause.
- ✓ Use everyday language that is accessible to most communities: people with a variety of disabilities, people with English as a second language and people with low-literacy.



- ✓ Use direct, literal language.
- ✓ Avoid jargon, academic or policy language and idioms.
- ✓ Break down ideas and don't present too many ideas at once.
- ✓ Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- ✓ Use examples.
- ✓ Avoid big words. Little words can simplify "big" ideas.
- ✓ Be concise.

EXAMPLES OF PLAIN LANGUAGE

- ✓ Replace "if appropriate" with "if needed."
- ✓ Replace "prescribing physician" with "your doctor."
- ✓ Replace "assist" with "help"
- ✓ Replace "require" and "requirements" with "need" and "needs."
- ✓ Replace "request" with "ask."
- ✓ Replace "provide" with "give."
- ✓ Replace "access" with "get."

RESOURCES

For more in-depth information on plain language writing:

- 🔗 http://www.msktc.org/lib/docs/KT_Toolkit/MSKTC_Plain_Lang_Tool_508.pdf
- 🔗 <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/bigdoc/fullbigdoc.pdf>

OTHER TIPS FOR MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE






Simple layout and presentation. Use lots of headings. Headings should be straightforward and lead the reader easily through the logic of the document/message.

Simple design. Use pictures to convey the message. Don't have too much text or multiple images on one page.








USING UNIVERSAL ACCESS SYMBOLS

Universal symbols can be used to promote and publicize accessibility of places, programs and other activities for people with various disabilities. We recommend using these symbols in your public media releases, if the reception centre and/or places evacuees are being referred to are accessible in the ways described below. This will let people with disabilities know, by the use of the symbol, whether or not the facility or service is accessible to them.

<p>Access to Low Vision This symbol may be used to indicate access for people who are blind or have low vision.</p>	
<p>Accessibility Symbol The wheelchair symbol should be used to show access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance or bathroom, or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users. Remember that a ramped entrance is not completely accessible if there are no curb cuts and an elevator is not accessible if it can only be reached via steps.</p>	
<p>Telephone Typewriter (TTY) Also known as text telephone (TT) or telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), TTY indicates a telephone device used with the telephone (and the phone number) for communication between people who are deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired and/or hearing.</p>	
<p>Volume Control Telephone This symbol indicates the location of telephones that have handsets with amplified sound and/or adjustable volume controls.</p>	
<p>Sign Language Interpretation The symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided.</p>	



<p>Assistive Listening Systems</p> <p>These systems transmit sound via hearing aids or head sets. They include infrared, loop and FM systems. Portable systems may be available from the same audiovisual equipment suppliers that service conferences and meetings. If a facility being used as a reception centre has a loop or FM system, you can use this symbol.</p>	
<p>Accessible Print</p> <p>The symbol for large print is "Large Print" printed in 16-18 Point or larger text. Use this symbol if print materials are available in large print. Sans serif or modified serif print with good contrast is highly recommended and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing.</p>	
<p>The Information Symbol</p> <p>The most valuable commodity of today's society is information. To a person with a disability, it is essential. For example, the symbol may be used on signage or on a floor plan to indicate the location of the information or security desk where there is more information or materials concerning access accommodations and services.</p>	
<p>Closed Captioning (CC)</p> <p>This symbol indicates that a television program or videotape is closed captioned for deaf or hard of hearing people (and others). TV sets that have a built-in or separate decoder are equipped to display dialogue for programs that are captioned. The alternative would be open captioning which translates dialogue and other sounds into print.</p>	
<p>Braille Symbol</p> <p>This symbol indicates that printed matter is available in Braille, such as publications and signage.</p>	
<p>Special thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts Graphic design assistance by the Graphic Artist Guild; www.nsnnet.org/symbols.html</p>	



MEDIA

Be ambassadors for accessible media. When providing information to television and/or visual-based social media, request that they relay this information to the public in alternative formats (windowing and captioning).

For emergency information, open captioning is preferable because a person may not be at home where they have a closed caption decoder.

Make television media aware that, if they are using a sign language interpreter when a spokesperson is relaying information without using “windowing,” the camera needs to include the sign language interpreter in the frame so people who are deaf can see the interpreter on television. ■

FOR EMERGENCY INFORMATION, OPEN CAPTIONING IS PREFERABLE BECAUSE A PERSON MAY NOT BE AT HOME WHERE THEY HAVE A CLOSED CAPTION DECODER.

