

# Delivering Accessible Customer Service

St. Joseph's Health Care, London is committed to delivering accessible care in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all patients with disabilities. The provision of care is in the spirit of integration as we seek for the patient to have the opportunity to benefit from the same care and services, in the same place, and in the same or similar manner as others.

Accessible care and service can mean many different things depending on the patient or client – it is important to understand that each individual may need unique accommodations depending on his or her disability. Asking "How may I help you?" first will allow the patient to explain if and how you can assist them.

## Here are some general tips for providing accessible service:

### Physical Disability

- ✓ If a person is in a wheelchair move to his or her level so it is easier to make eye contact while talking
- ✓ Do not touch, lean on, or reach over a person's assistive device.
- ✓ Know the location of elevators, accessible washrooms and assistive devices in your area.

### Intellectual or Developmental Disability

- ✓ Don't make assumptions about what people can or cannot do.
- ✓ Use plain language and provide one piece of information at a time.

### Deafblind

- ✓ Some people may have some sight or hearing while others have neither.
- ✓ A card with instructions on how to communicate with them may be given to you.
- ✓ Speak directly to the person, not the intervener

### Mental Health Related Disability

- ✓ Allow access to supports, such as close family members, when communicating with or providing care.
- ✓ Be confident and reassuring.
- ✓ Listen carefully to his or her needs.

### Service Animals

- ✓ Avoid touching, talking to, or making eye contact with a service animal.
- ✓ Where there is a need to exclude a service animal, ensure other measures are in place for the person.

### Learning Disability

- ✓ Ask the person how he/she would like to receive information.
- ✓ Take your time. Offer to explain the information again.
- ✓ Use clear spoken and written language

### Speech or Language Impairment

- ✓ When possible ask 'yes' or 'no' questions.
- ✓ Encourage the use of gestures or pictures.
- ✓ If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information

### Vision Impairment

- ✓ Let the person know that you are there by announcing yourself first - do not touch the person.
- ✓ Offer to read or describe print materials.
- ✓ If you are asked to guide them, offer your elbow and provide clear and precise directions.

### Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing

- ✓ Capture the person's attention before speaking.
- ✓ Position yourself so that your face and mouth are visible for lip reading. Keep objects like pens and hands away from your mouth.
- ✓ Reduce background noise if the person uses a hearing device.
- ✓ Speak clearly and offer a pen and paper if this method of communication is preferred.

### Support Person

- ✓ Allow the person access to his or her support person unless a person's safety is at risk.
- ✓ Speak directly to the person with a disability, unless asked to speak to the support person.
- ✓ Obtain consent from the patient before confidential information is shared with a support person present.

### Memory or Cognitive Impairment

- ✓ Approach the person from the front so he/she is not startled.
- ✓ Use plain language and short sentences. Give one piece of information at a time. Show the person what you want him/her to do.