



October 10, 2006

The National Capital Region Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA-NCR) is a non-profit organization led by hard of hearing and deafened individuals with varying degrees of hearing loss. CHHA-NCR advocates the rights and needs of hard of hearing and deafened persons in an effort to break down social barriers, create awareness and fully integrate hard of hearing and deafened persons into our city.

Thank you for contacting us and requesting input and ideas regarding the proposed blueprint for an integrated health network. I am attaching some information that may be of use to you in your planning process.

CHHA-NCR is concerned about the low level of access of the physical environment for many health facilities as well as the ongoing need for in-service training that takes into account the needs of the hard of hearing and deafened. We strongly encourage the Chaplain Local Health Integration Network considers the four major areas of concern to hard of hearing persons.

A) Built-in environment

- 1) An audit of existing services should be completed using a checklist similar to the one available at <http://www.chha.ca/chha/projects-communication.php>
- 2) Parking lot pay booths should have digital display screens to show cost of parking.
- 3) Public telephone banks should have at least one Public Pay TTY phone included with regular pay phones; all telephones should be hearing aid compatible and have volume control.
- 4) All entrances to facilities should have directional/information maps.
- 5) Every facility should have at least one designated meeting room that provides a built in Induction Loop/FM system to meet the needs have those who require an assistive listening system.
- 6) All public address systems should be designed so that information is given visually as well as audibly.

- 7) Environmental acoustics need to take into consideration the needs of person with hearing loss by the judicious selection of floor finishes, wall surfaces and ceilings in order not to amplify noise unduly.
- 8) Entrance and elevator communication systems shall contain visual, text-based and audible signals.
- 9) Fire alarms should provide both auditory and visual signals.
- 10) At least one service counter should be fitted with a portable induction loop system for hearing aid users.

B) Technology

- 1) The technology used should match the need and the venue. Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's) come in three formats: FM, Infrared and Induction Loop. They all have their advantages and disadvantages and careful choosing of the system is important to maximize the benefit. An example of this is choosing an Induction Loop system for service counters and meeting rooms. With Induction Loops, the hearing aid user does not need to be provided with accessories. On the other hand Induction Loops may not be the best system to use in a large venue where persons who do not wear hearing aid could not benefit from them or, for those who do not have the T-coil capability that allows them to use Induction Loops. In this case an FM or IR system would be a better choice. Today's modern systems allow FM and IR systems to patch-in a neckloop (cord) that could be used by those who prefer to use Induction Loops. The systems are available to meet any size gathering, including one to one encounters, meetings and socials.
- 2) Different types of patch cords or receivers should be available to patients or visitors. Since there are many types of hearing aids in use (in the ear, behind the ear, cochlear implants, bone conduction and body-worn), there are no "one-receiver-fits-all" systems. Patch cords should include direct-connect; silhouette, and neckloops. Similarly receivers can include earbuds; headsets; and headphones. The types of cords and receivers used will depend on the system used and the manufacturer. Examples of these can be found at <http://www.chs.ca/chsshop/shopdisplaycategories.asp?id=17&cat=Technical+Devices>

C) Promotion

- 1) Accessibility services for persons with hearing loss should be so designated by the use of the appropriate signs/symbols used to indicate the type of accessibility provided for persons with hearing loss (TTY, Assistive Listening, Captioning, etc.). <http://www.chha.ca/chha/projects-symbols.php>

- 2) Accessibility provisions for persons with hearing loss should become part of the organization's accessibility guidelines.
- 3) Promotion of the service should be included in all media ads including paper, web, radio and television. Some of this promotion should be aimed directly at the intended population through the local clubs, branches and community centres.

D) Staff training and Awareness

- 1) Staff require in-house training to ensure they know where it is; how to use the ALD system; and how to communicate with hard of hearing patients and visitors.

Examples of in-house training available include:

- <http://www.chha.ca/chha/projects-doctors.php>
<http://www.chha.ca/chha/projects-nurses.php>
<http://www.chha.ca/chha/projects-training.php>
- CHHA's Hearing Loss Awareness Training Seminar

There are many benefits to providing the above. Not only will hard of hearing and deafened benefit but also "Friends of" the various facilities such fundraisers, patrons, board members, tourists and other visitors to the facilities. Regardless of the severity of the hearing loss or whether they use a hearing aid or not, those using the system will be able spend an enjoyable stay and not feel like they missed something. With the right system and accessories even guides, board, advisory, committee meetings, and fundraising events will benefit from the health facility's vision of a fully accessible centre.

The National Capital Region branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is at your disposal to tour your facilities if you wish, and to test existing systems and new systems before they are purchased.

I hope I have been helpful and look forward to hearing from you in due course of time.

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