



# People First

A HELPFUL GUIDE TO DISABILITY &  
ASSISTING THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

**NORFOLK GENERAL HOSPITAL**

## People First

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*“Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.”*  
- Douglas Adams

People First - This refers to the challenge that people with disabilities face in accessing the necessities of daily living. Too often, we see the wheelchair or the white cane or the hearing aid, first - as if the disability defines the person.

Ontario’s new Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Act requires all service providers to remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

In the coming years we will see specific regulations covering:

- Customer Service
- Transportation
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Built Environment

Our “People First” Brochure is designed to give you a quick overview of the process of Accessibility and what you can do to help. Of necessity, we categorize and group various disabilities.

It is not a detailed discussion of the many opportunities to provide for accessibility - but it’s a start. We hope this will give you a brief understanding of the steps we have taken to ensure full accessibility. You can do your part by understanding and taking the time and effort to treat “people first” with respect.

*“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we understand that all threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour.”*  
- Maya Angelou

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## Did you know?

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### **A 2005 survey by the Canadian Council in Social Development revealed that:**

- ▶ 3.4 million Canadians report having a disability that restricts them in their daily activities (about 1 in every 10 people).
- ▶ Disability rates increase with age and of the population 65 and over – 40% report having some form of disability.
- ▶ 70% of all persons with disabilities report needing support with daily activities.
- ▶ Over half a million adult Canadians report having some form of vision loss and over a million report some form of hearing loss – not corrected by eyewear or hearing aids.
- ▶ 57% of adults with disabilities require some type of aid or device.

## **Accessibility at NGH**

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The Ontario Government recognizes that persons with disabilities are no different than anyone else in terms of the services they have a right to expect. It was this recognition that gave rise to the 2001 Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) and more recently the 2005 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards, the main objective is to have a barrier free and fully accessible Ontario by 2025. The accessibility standards apply to NGH and as such the Hospital must produce an annual report on the current year's accomplishments and the subsequent year's strategies with respect to accessibility.

The Norfolk General Hospital has formed an Accessibility Working Group, comprised of members from the Hospital, and The Nursing Home and receives input from the Nursing Practice Committee, the Patient Safety Team, the Patient Care Portfolio and Management Forum. The Group works actively during the year, through meetings and internal audits, to prepare the Annual Accessibility Plan and continually improve our accessibility.

## What is a disability?

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### Disability and handicap have two very different meanings.

“Disability” refers to a restriction in a person’s ability to participate in a specific activity. “Handicap” refers to an environmental or attitudinal barrier that prevents the person with a disability from participating to their maximum potential.

*eg. A disability is the restriction a person who is deaf has in their ability to hear spoken conversation, a handicap would be another person’s reluctance to use means other than speech to communicate with this person.*

### General Communication Tips:

- **PEOPLE FIRST!** Focus on the person, rather than the disability.
- **Approach the person from the front, where they can see you.** This position allows you to communicate with expressions or body language that often times speak louder than words.
- **Speak directly to the person,** rather than to an attendant, companion or interpreter.
- **Speak in a normal voice.** It can be insulting to speak loudly or slowly to a person with a disability, they will let you know if they have difficulty hearing or understanding you.
- **Avoid actions and words that suggest the person should be treated differently.** It is fine to invite a person in a wheelchair to “go for a walk” or to ask a person who is blind if they “see what you mean”.
- **Listen to what people say.** Do not assume you know what they want or what is best for them.
- **Don’t hesitate to offer assistance if the situation warrants.** Respect the person’s right to accept or refuse your offer.
- **If you are unsure how to act or what is appropriate – ask the person.**

## People who are culturally deaf or have hearing loss

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Accommodations for people who are culturally deaf or experience some degree of hearing loss are those of communication and language. These groups are separate and distinct.

### Facts:

#### Persons with hearing loss

People who are hard of hearing or deafened are those that have a loss of hearing sound that can range from mild to profound and whose language is a spoken language i.e. English, French. Those that are hard of hearing can often hear some sounds but may not be able to understand speech.

People with hearing loss may use speech, lip reading, speech reading, reading or a print transcriber to communicate.

#### Culturally deaf persons

Culturally deaf persons are members of a cultural/linguistic minority group whose language is a signed language i.e. American Sign Language (ASL), Langues de Signes Quebecois (LSQ).

Culturally deaf person's first language is a signed language and therefore signed language interpretation services are required. The printed use of a spoken language will vary depending on the individual and situation.

### Tips:

- Determine the language to be used and what personalized accommodations are required.
- For signed language, secure services of a professional interpreter. For spoken language, make available print transcription, assistive listening devices.
- Calmly get the person's attention before speaking and maintain eye contact.
- Speak/and or write to the person in a visually and auditory quiet area (if possible). When speaking, do so slowly and clearly, being careful not to over-emphasize words or distort lip movements. When writing, use plain language and graphics. As required, do both.
- Keep your face visual – don't cover with hands or masks.
- Use pantomime, body language and facial expressions – these are vital communication tools.

## People who are deaf-blind

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### Facts:

A person who is deaf-blind may see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

### Tips:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A person who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with him or her or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate.
- Speak directly to the person as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deaf-blind.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it's an emergency.

## People who are blind or have low vision

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### Facts:

Low vision denotes a level of vision that is 20/70 or worse and cannot be fully corrected with glasses – indicating you see at 20 ft what a person with good vision sees at 70 ft.

Low vision is not the same as blindness – a person with low vision has some residual sight and usually requires adaptations for the performance of daily activities, such as reading.

A person is considered “legally blind” when the best corrected central acuity is 20/200 (normal acuity is 20/20) or the peripheral vision is narrowed to 20 degrees or less in the better eye.

People who are legally blind may still have some vision – very few people experience total loss of vision.

### Tips:

- Identify yourself do not assume the person will recognize your voice.
- Offer your arm, rather than grabbing theirs.
- Let them know of possible hazards, such as doors, steps, changes in terrain (concrete to gravel or grass) etc.
- Never interfere with a guide dog by petting or distracting it. A guide dog provides a service to the owner and when working should not be distracted. Do not pet a service dog unless you have permission.
- Let the person know when you are leaving and if possible leave them in contact with a tangible object such as a table or a wall. This will eliminate the problem of leaving them in an open space with no point of reference.

## People with physical or mobility disabilities

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### Facts:

Physical disabilities occur widely and can range from arthritis to paralysis.

Physical disability goes beyond having to use a wheelchair or wear a back brace. There are many medical conditions, such as multiple sclerosis and chronic fatigue syndrome which may affect person's mobility.

Physical disabilities cannot be generalized because each person will have different causes, symptoms and management strategies.

Physical disabilities do not necessarily indicate other disabilities as well, such as difficulty hearing or a developmental disability.

### Tips:

- Try to sit or crouch, so that you are speaking at eye level.
- Respect personal space. A person's wheelchair is essentially an extension of their body. Do not lean on it or move them without their permission.
- Do not assume help is needed and accept that person's right to refuse help.
- Be aware. Take notice of what is accessible and inaccessible to people in wheelchairs.

## People with developmental disabilities

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### Facts:

A developmental disability should not be confused with a psychiatric or mental illness.

eg. Developmental disability – Downs Syndrome

eg. Psychiatric disability – Schizophrenia

A developmental disability is characterized by a difficulty in understanding, communicating, mobility, controlling behavior or a combination of these.

A developmental disability does not necessarily mean the person is of low intelligence.

People with developmental disabilities may have difficulty with both receptive and expressive language (communicating and understanding what is being communicated).

Sensory issues (over or under stimulated senses) are a problem with many types of developmental disabilities.

### Tips:

- Do not be offended by lack of/inappropriate response(s) or unconventional behaviour.
- Maintain eye contact. This shows respect and that you are genuinely listening and trying to help.
- Do not use complex terminology or jargon – use simple sentences.
- Clearly identify yourself, your role and that you are trying to assist/help them.
- Offer physical assistance and direction when necessary.
- Address any inappropriate behaviour immediately – explain any rules/regulations or behaviour expectations. It can be more difficult to explain why behaviour is inappropriate if it is not dealt with the first time.

## People with mental health disabilities

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### **Facts:**

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You won't know that a person has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. And usually it will not affect your service at all.

But, if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

### **Tips:**

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with your patients and visitors to meet their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.

## People who stutter or have trouble speaking

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### Facts:

Stuttering is a pattern of speech where the speaker repeats or prolongs sounds for an unusually long time.

Stuttering may be aggravated by anxiety or stress.

Profoundly pre-lingually deaf people are those who were born with insufficient hearing to enable them to acquire speech normally, or who lost their hearing prior to the age at which speech is required and thus have difficulty forming the words the way they are commonly heard.

Neither situation is indicative of a developmental or psychiatric disability.

### Tips:

- Listen patiently and do not finish their sentences.
- Listen to what they are saying, rather than how they are saying it.
- Do not interrupt the person, but ask for clarification if needed.
- Attempt to create a relaxed environment where both of you feel at ease.
- Do not suggest that they slow down or start over. This can call attention to the disability and increase anxiety.
- Ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” if possible.

## People with intellectual or developmental disabilities

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### Facts:

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to communicate. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language.

As much as possible, treat your patients and visitors with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

### Tips:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Make sure the person understands what you've said.
- If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their companion or attendant.

## Services/Accommodation available at the NGH

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- **Accessible Elevators**
  - The main elevators are equipped with Braille buttons and audio tones.
- **Accessible Entrances**
  - The Main Entrances are equipped with curb cuts for easy access.
  - The Main Entrances are equipped with automatic door openers to Building Code Standards.
- **Accessible Parking**
  - Parking spaces for persons with disabilities are conveniently located around the building.
- **Accessible Washrooms**
  - There are accessible public washrooms for persons with disabilities on the Main and First floor of the Hospital.
- **Amplified Telephone**
  - An amplified telephone is available at Patient Registration.
- **Directory Floor Plan Signs**
  - A Hospital Directory with floor plan is on the wall at the Main Entrance
- **Easy Access Doors**
  - Our Internal main access doors are equipped with automatic door openers and/or hold open devices.
  - Our External entrances are equipped with automatic door openers. There is a sliding door at the top of the ramp at the Main entrance.
- **Handrails**
  - Main hallways are equipped with handrails.
- **Pay Telephone**
  - A wheelchair accessible pay telephone is located at the Main Entrance
- **Pocket Pagers**
  - A pocket pager that vibrates for those with a hearing disability is available at Patient Registration.



- **Printed Floor Plan**
  - Printed floor plans are available at the Main Entrance. Copies are available upon request.
- **Relay Service**
  - National Relay Service 1-800-855-0511
- **Sign Language Interpreters**
  - Available upon request – advanced notice is required.
  - Contact the Canadian Hearing Society in Brantford at (519) 753-3162
  - Canadian Hearing Society TTY Services (519 720-0251
  - [www.chs.ca](http://www.chs.ca)
- **Teletypewriter (TTY) Text Phone Device**
  - Portable device is available at Switchboard or call (519) 429-6944
- **Television**
  - Closed captioning available
- **Wheelchairs**
  - Available at Emergency entrance and Main Entrance
  - Extra wide wheelchairs also available



## Use of service animals and support persons

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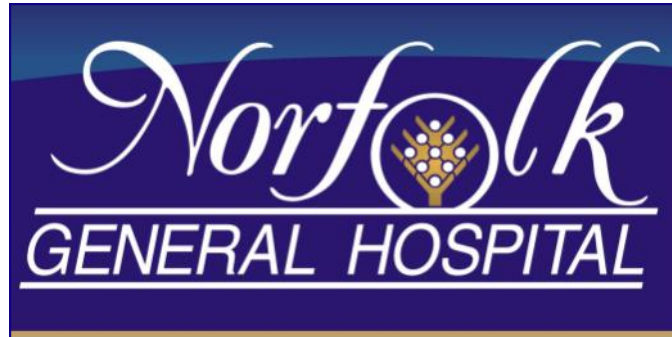
We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Norfolk General Hospital's premises with his or her support person.

At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

See Management Policy Number 1-a-10-Customer Service: Providing services to Persons with Disabilities. This policy is available online at [www.ngh.on.ca](http://www.ngh.on.ca).





Patient Care Services  
Norfolk General Hospital  
365 West Street,  
Simcoe, Ontario  
N3Y 1T7



(519) 426-0130 Ext. 1301  
accessibility@ngh.on.ca  
Fax (519) 428-2946

[www.ngh.on.ca](http://www.ngh.on.ca)