



Working with Persons who are Deaf-Blind

Humber College is increasing accessibility for persons 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 are deaf-blind.

A person who is deaf-blind has a combination of vision and hearing loss, which results in greater difficulties accessing information. Deaf-blindness is a unique and separate disability from deafness or blindness. An individual with the combined losses of hearing and vision require specialized services including adapted communication methods. These services are provided in the deaf-blind person's preferred method of communication, which can include tactile signing systems, braille, large print, communication boards, or any other method required.

Most people who are deaf-blind are accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with the person's communication needs. 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. Provided below are suggestions for interacting with persons who are deaf-blind to ensure they have equal access to goods and services at Humber College.

Suggestions for Interacting with People who are Deaf-Blind	
✓	Always ask, "How can I help you?" People who are deaf-blind will tell you what they need
✓	Do not 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 may provide you with a card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
✓	Speak directly to the person, not to the intervener.
✓	When you approach a person who is deaf-blind, make sure you identify yourself to the intervener.
✓	Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.

Sources: Tips on Serving Customer with Disabilities. Ontario Education Services Corporation <http://www.alcdsb.on.ca/aboutus/pdf/accessibility/AccessibilityTipBooklet.pdf>
Understanding Disabilities. Ministry of Social and Community Services.
http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/understanding_accessibility/daeaf_blind.aspx