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**Item No. 15.3.1**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 11, 2023**

**TO:** Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Savage, Chair, Executive Standing Committee

**DATE:** June 26, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Municipal Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

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**ORIGIN**

June 26, 2023 meeting of Executive Standing Committee, Item 12.1.2.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

**Executive Standing Committee**

Terms of Reference – Priority Areas and Corporate Performance Objectives of the Council

9. The Executive Standing Committee shall:

(a) have strategic oversight of progress on the Municipality's Corporate Performance Objectives and priority areas of the Council;

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to implement an 18-month pilot program to offer sign language interpreter services, as well as to include more technology specifically designed for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing within recreation programs.

## **BACKGROUND**

Executive Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated June 13, 2023 to consider Municipal Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **DISCUSSION**

Executive Standing Committee considered the staff report dated June 13, 2023 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Meetings of the Executive Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated June 13, 2023.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated June 13, 2023.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:       Catie Campbell, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.490.4210

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P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No. 12.1.2**  
**Executive Standing Committee**  
**June 26, 2023**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Executive Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 13, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Municipal Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**ORIGIN**

December 17, 2018, Executive Standing Committee motion (item 12.2.1), MOVED by Deputy Mayor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Zurawski

THAT the Executive Standing Committee (ESC) request a staff report on the following:

1. The development and implementation of a municipal wide policy providing HRM residents of all ages with appropriate support services (sign language interpreters, notetakers, and / or CART) when accessing any HRM recreational programs including day camps.
2. The use of professional sign language interpretation of televised HRM City Hall meetings where interpreters will be shown in split screen as opposed to PIP ("picture in picture").

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

11(2) In the general exercise of its powers, the Council shall take into account the principle of accessibility for its citizens with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to implement an 18-month pilot program to offer sign language interpreter services, as well as to include more technology specifically designed for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing within recreation programs.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2018, the Deafness Advocacy Association of Nova Scotia presented to the HRM Accessibility Advisory Committee regarding the inability of the Deaf community to access interpreters for HRM recreation programs and services. As a result, the Executive Standing Committee requested a staff report on the

development and implementation of a municipal wide policy regarding access to appropriate support services when accessing any HRM recreation programs, including day camps. It was also requested to examine the feasibility of use of professional sign language interpretation of televised HRM City Hall meetings where interpreters will be shown in split screen, as opposed to picture in picture. Part 2 of the motion is discussed in the Council Chamber Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing report.

The Council approved strategies, [Diversity and Inclusion Framework | Halifax](#) and [Accessibility Strategy Halifax | Halifax](#) were considered when creating this Deaf and hard of hearing report.

Based on the initial information provided to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, staff examined what had previously been done throughout Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Parks & Recreation in terms of access to support services for the Deaf community. There were no records found specific to sign language interpreter requests for HRM recreation programs. There have, however, been requests for supports that have been met through using visuals, gestures and simple sign language offered by individual HRM staff. In a few instances, there have been trained staff that had the ability to communicate through sign language and were able to assist during a recreation program or camp. In some cases, community members were able to secure official interpreters for recreation programs, however, the request process for interpretive services was not consistent across recreation centres.

Currently, there is no formal process for these requests. As there was no data collected, staff were unable to get information specific to the costs and demand for providing the appropriate accommodations for Deaf and hard of hearing persons in recreation programs in HRM. Staff conducted a jurisdictional scan to get more data about current policies or procedures regarding support services for Deaf and hard of hearing persons in recreation programs in municipalities across Canada. Community engagement was initiated with community groups that support Deaf persons, and the Deaf and hard of hearing community was consulted through a survey to ensure that the voice of the Deaf community and hard of hearing individuals are at the forefront.

**Key Highlights from HRM and the Municipal Jurisdictional Scan:**

- In some new HRM owned and operated facilities, such as St. Andrews Community Centre, technology (FM loops) was included in the infrastructure at the time of construction. This technology, however, is not well used by the public, as it might not be well known that it is available.
- No specific programs, services, policies, technology or access to interpreters were found in other non HRM operated recreation facilities.
- Halifax Public Libraries provide American Sign Language supports upon request. The Halifax Central Library has the Frequency Modulation (FM) personal amplification system available for those that use hearing aids.
- In municipal recreation facilities across Nova Scotia, staff were not able to locate any specific policies pertaining to access for the Deaf and hard of hearing population. The only specific programming found was sign language courses offered in some Recreation Centres.
- Most municipalities and recreation providers consulted were interested in what policies HRM would establish and were eager to learn about how to support underserved communities.
- Canada-wide, there were a limited number of defined policies or procedures discovered. Many municipalities accommodated requests on an as needed basis but did not have a formal process or policy in place for requesting these services. Some programs included:
  - Programmed swimming lessons specific for children who require sign language interpretation,
  - Free access for interpreters in programs
  - A financial amount per person or a cap of number of weeks support is provided throughout some municipalities across Canada.

The City of Edmonton was the only municipality identified that has a comprehensive program specifically designed to measure the community need for sign language interpretation and other accommodations. In April 2021, the 'Pilot Project for Accessible Communication Services in Registered Recreation Programs' was launched. Its aim is to test a system that will help people who are Deaf and hard of hearing fully access the activities and experiences that are important to them. Any community member in a registered recreation

program can request technology (hearing loops, signage, live transcribing) or services, (such as sign language interpreters). The following link provides more information about the program in Edmonton: [Services for People who are Hard of Hearing or Deaf | City of Edmonton](#)

### **Community Feedback**

#### Community Organizations

Staff contacted several community organizations to gather information, however limited information was received. Deafness Advocacy Association of Nova Scotia was specifically contacted for feedback and collaboration however, no response was received. Other organization consulted included: The Society for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA), and Nova Scotia Community College American Sign Language (ASL) program,

#### Community Survey

During COVID-19 restrictions in April 2022, an online survey was created and was shared 36 times on social media. Staff shared the link with IWK Health, Nova Scotia Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) and the Deafness Advocacy Association Nova Scotia (DAANS).

#### Survey Response

There were 17 responses to the survey, with critical feedback being received that it was not accessible to all Deaf Nova Scotians, as it was in English and not presented in American Sign Language (ASL). Fifty percent of the respondents identified as being a member of the Deaf community, 31.25% identified as a service provider for the Deaf and hard of hearing community and 18.75% as 'other'. The majority of those identified as 'other' were family members of someone that is a member of the Deaf community. Many people (75.57%) indicated that they were interested in being contacted to discuss the topic further. Staff reached out after the initial survey was received and will continue to connect. See *Attachment A* for a summary report of the survey.

#### Main Themes from Public Consultation

The survey respondents were not satisfied with the Municipality's current support services for the Deaf community; 75% of the respondents had at some point accessed HRM programs but were not able to access sufficient resources during these programs. Feedback received regarding the support that was provided was that the participant had never been turned away from a program, but it was the program staff offering the accommodation and this accommodation was not sufficient. Suggestions received were to have improved access to ASL interpreters; materials to read prior to the program; Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning; increased awareness of challenges faced by the Deaf community; and provide best ways to positively interact with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals; better advertising of support and accommodations that are available; more connection with the Deaf community using the written word and available technology; and having staff that identify as having ASL skills.

### **DISCUSSION**

Based on the Deaf community's expression of their inability to access interpreters, as well as the findings of the jurisdictional scan and community consultation, staff determined that more data would be required to create a policy that will reflect the community's need. A pilot program like the program offered in the City of Edmonton, whose purpose is to collect data and connect more purposely with the Deaf community is proposed.

#### **Pilot Program**

Should the Regional Council give direction to complete the proposed pilot program, the workplan will begin September 2023 with the creation of a working group and targeted community consultation. The program will examine the following areas of need and will use the data collected to make recommendations:

- Establish program guidelines and policies

- Access to Recreation services and programming
  - Access to interpreters
  - Access to technology
- Training for staff
- Communication Plan
- Partnership and funding opportunities
- Evaluation and Outcomes measurement

#### Establish program guidelines and policies

For the working group to understand the needs of the Deaf community and individuals who are hard of hearing, this pilot program is essential. The data collected will help to guide the working group in creating a policy that reflects the needs of the community. The expectation is that HRM's partner facilities will be participants in the working group to ensure that services are consistent throughout HRM programming. Through the creation of the pilot program in phase 2, guidelines and policies will be based on the data collected and, on the feedback, gathered from the community.

#### Access to Recreation Services and Programming

As reflected in the community engagement, the Deaf community have felt that they have not had equitable access to support services with recreation programming. As part of the pilot program, increased access to the following areas will be explored:

- Access to Interpreters  
Through community consultation with people who are Deaf and hard of hearing, access to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters would be the gold standard for recreation programs to be translated into their own language. This pilot program would examine the feasibility of offering broad access to ASL interpreters, building a business case that would examine the cost as well as access to interpreters. However, with only one vendor available for in-person interpretation, the working group would need to work with the vendor to ensure the demand meets their capacity.
- Access to Technology  
Access to technology (See Attachment B) offers people who are Deaf or hard of hearing new and better ways to communicate in recreation facilities and in recreation programs, while ensuring respectful and inclusive communication with customers. The working group would also look at the use of this technology for others who access recreation facilities and do not speak English as their first language, and therefore, experience barriers communicating. The working group would need to identify potential vendors to ensure availability within the first phase of this project.

#### Training for Staff

Community consultation indicated further training could help promote positive and respectful interactions with customers who are Deaf and hard of hearing. Training opportunities for front line staff would be developed and rolled out in a manner that supports staff in their learning and is culturally appropriate. Feedback will be collected from staff and customers to see where the gaps are, and training will be adapted to reflect those gaps. This training will proceed regardless of the approval of the pilot project,

#### Communication Plan

Through community engagement (survey and community consultation), it was expressed that more effort is required to reach out to the Deaf community with resources that use their own language, specifically ASL. The working group will ensure that a communication plan is in place, so it is clear to the public that these services are available and how to access them. This will be done in consultation with Corporate Communication, Deaf and hard of hearing individuals and community groups that serve the Deaf and hard of hearing community to ensure there is culturally appropriate communication.

#### Partnership and Funding Opportunities

The working group will explore partnership opportunities with community groups that serve the Deaf community. Additionally, accessibility grants offered through provincial and federal government will be explored.

### Evaluation Outcome Measurements

The pilot program will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that the original goals of the program are being met. See attachment C for details of the evaluation plan for the program.

### **Conclusion**

Further work is required by HRM Parks and Recreation to connect with the Deaf and hard of hearing community, to ensure that their needs are being met. This pilot program will further explore the needs of the Deaf and hard of hearing community and will investigate additional data on ASL technology as well as how to accommodate the Deaf and hard of hearing community within Recreation programs and services.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Costs associated with creating the pilot program for the Deaf and for individuals who are hard of hearing, are estimated to be \$70,000 per year to support the following:

- ASL services for up to 30 individuals - \$117.16/hour for 10 hours of programming,
- ASL services for specific programs for individuals with hearing impairments, the cost of technology and ASL services for group programs is budgeted at approximately \$20,000,
- The remainder of the budget will be allocated to the procurement of technology to assist with recreation registration, in class services, web upgrades and general adaptations aimed at making processes easier for individuals with hearing impairments and Deaf individuals.

There are items identified in the action plan, such as community consultation and the creation of the working group that can be accommodated with existing resources and will not have a financial implication in this fiscal year. Any additional staffing and administrative costs required for the completion of the pilot program will be included in the proposed 2024/25 Parks & Recreation operating budget as a pressure. The pressure would require funding from general tax revenues in fiscal 2024/25 of \$70,000 and could increase the average residential tax bill by \$0.25. This funding would support the subsequent elements of the pilot program and may be expedited if funding opportunities are available through other orders of government or organizations, through grants or other funding. The financial requirement of the implementation of the findings of pilot program will be included as part of the 2025/26 budget process.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

The risks considered are low. The only identified risk is in meeting requests due to current vendor availability. The working group would examine this more closely and work with the vendor to access interpreter availability based on the demand. There could be a reputational risk to not approving the pilot program based on community consultation. Consideration was also given to hazardous, operational, financial, and strategic risks.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement initiated within group that serve the Deaf community as well as Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. As reflected earlier in the discussion section of this report, better and more consistent access to technology and service target towards Deaf and hard of hearing individuals is requested.

Staff presented to the Halifax Regional Municipality's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Committee was receptive of the information given. Staff will plan to engage this committee further during the developmental stages of the pilot program.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no immediate environmental implication associated with this report.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Executive Standing Committee could choose not to recommend that Regional Council direct the CAO to implement the pilot program. This would place a limit on the ability to collect data on the cost associated with offering access to interpreters and technology as there would not be budget associated with use of interpreters or procurement of technology. Staff would continue to offer adaptation on an as requested basis and would provide training to staff regarding respectful communication to the Deaf community.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Summary Report of Community Survey  
Attachment B: Examples of Adapted Technology and Cost Breakdown  
Attachment C: Evaluation Outcome Measures

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Cassady Yochoff, Inclusion and Accessibility Specialist, 902.490.4410

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## SUMMARY REPORT OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SURVEY

### COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS

(17 respondents out of 58,000 Nova Scotians (as per the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians) that identify as Deaf)

**1. Please self-identify:**

- I am a member of the deaf community (50%)
- I am hard of hearing (0)
- I am a service provider for the Deaf and hard of hearing community (31.25%)
- Other: Family, parent, community member and service provider (18.75%)

**2. Do you know of any supports to access recreation activities within the Municipality for the Deaf and hard of hearing community?**

- Yes (5.8%)
- No (94.12%)

**2a. If yes (most people skipped this question)**

- What recreation-based organizations are offering support?
  - Don't know of any (did not answer)
  - Not aware of any (did not answer)
- Do you find these supports sufficient?
  - Yes (15.38%)
  - No (84.62%)

**2b1. If no (7 people skipped this question):**

- What are the gaps that these resources do not cover?
  - No access, no captioning, no CART, no interpretation
  - I am not sure if there are, the last time I signed up for a program was many years ago and I requested for Interpreter, and they didn't have budget to cover.
  - We need to provide more interpreting services for the recreation classes and camps.
  - Availability of Interpreters(sic)
  - Swimming - hearing aids don't work in the pool. I have just told my kid in the past to follow what the instructor and other kids are doing. Now that he is older - I want him in lifeguard training and I am not sure how he can do this poolside. I don't even know if he can BE a lifeguard with a hearing disability and I feel I have no one to ask.
  - Barriers to communication. If the registration process accessible e.g., video-relay, TTY, described & closed-captioning, braille and enlarged print resources, accessible websites.
  - There are very few accessible activities. And generally, those who host programs balk at the costs of making it accessible. Accessibility should never come down to money but so often does.
  - There are very few supports either at the municipal or volunteer recreation level, especially to cover the costs for ASL Interpreting services.
  - I don't see any resources so far, what did they offer resources? Due to lack of advertisement or public relations.
  - I am not sure about a sign language interpreter. Who finds the interpreter? Who pays the interpreter?
- What resources would you like to see? (6 people skipped this question)
  - Captioning, CART, accurate speech to text, interpretation.

- Access to sign language interpreters for the deaf. Materials provided prior or after start of program to read over info.
- Some classes that are specifically have ASL interpretation whether or not Deaf or Hard of hearing people sign up.
- Availability of interpreters
- I guess I would just like to see an awareness of the challenges faced by children who are hard of hearing - especially when it comes to the difficulties of team sports. Schools have access to APSEA resources such as FM (A microphone that goes directly to a child's hearing aids or CI - the child and family does not own this and it's not affordable for every family to buy one.)
- Interpreting and captioning services
- Deaf and partially sighted mentors. More programs for children and youth with complex needs. Great inclusivity in programming via accessible transportation to and from programs, no fees for programs to support families.
- When interpreters, etc. are requested they just book them. Deaf people want access to the same programs as everyone else.
- More funding for ASL Interpreting services, more outreach to Deaf and hard of hearing to make them feel welcome.
- To provide more closed captioning, banners about the deaf cultures, train all staffs to be aware of deaf residents in HRM.

**3. Have you used the Municipality's recreation programs? (1 skipped this question)**

- Yes (75%)
- No (25%)

**3a. If yes:**

- Based on your experience or knowledge, do you find the Municipalities recreation programs accessible to the Deaf and hard of hearing community?
  - Yes (5.88%)
  - No (94.12%)
- How are municipal recreation programs accessible?
  - They are not accessible.
  - None
  - I have never been turned away from a program - mostly the teens running the place have been accommodating when we explained his need to have things repeated.
  - A lot of focus has been on physical accessibility which is of course important. But very little for general accessibility for the Deaf community.
  - hard to say as there seems to be a patchwork of accessibility and the Deaf/Hard of hearing participant needs to constantly advocate for accessibility.
  - No.
  - They would not be to a Deaf child.

**3b. If no:**

- how could they be improved? (3 people skipped this question)
  - Captioning, CART, interpretation. There are apps now that can be used in a pinch at an activity heavy event for the intro explanation. COVID has made virtual interpretation possible and can be displayed on screen beside presentation, with captions even.
  - It was a long time ago, 15-20 years ago.
  - Have interpreters at the ready. Advertise as having interpreters available. Hire Deaf or hard of hearing staff members to work at the classes and programs!
  - Tell us that there's interpreters available(sic)

- Ethical, qualified, skilled interpreters should be secured when needed. There should be ASL videos on the website for ASL users.
- Someone I could call about accessibility and options.
- Need to be advertised to the community that the events and programs are accessible.
- Hire signing Deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Consult with Community Partners such as NSDHHS, CNIB, Autism NS, Club Inclusion, IWK, NS Speech and Hearing, APSEA, various adult program service centres such as DASC, Corridor, etc.
- Be sure to train the employees what to approach properly with deaf people, many of them have no clue what to deal with them.
- They are not. They do not hire interpreters when requested/needed.
- Should say deaf and hard of hearing access accepted.
- Provide interpreters... there are hearing interpreters and Deaf interpreters... upon request.

**4. What information would be helpful for municipal recreation staff to know and/or do when providing recreation services to the deaf and hard of hearing community? (3 people skipped this question)**

- The attendees are not responsible for booking or paying for interpretation or setting up captioning. It is rec services responsibility to make their event/session inclusive of diverse genders, races, abilities. BUT please consult with attendees regarding appropriate accommodation one person may prefer captioning while another prefers interpretation, both can happen simultaneously. Also be mindful of the appropriateness of the hired interpreter for the event - ex. a male interpreter may not be appropriate for a swim class for Muslim women.
- It would be helpful to put a note on the website that there is accommodation available for deaf/hard of hearing community upon request and give advance time to arrange interpreters.
- Make it visual, don't cover your mouth. Don't shout. Learn asl!
- Promotion of interpreting services
- Do NOT hire interpreters through the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotia - they have historically caused harm to the Deaf community, and do not make efforts to secure the most qualified, ethical interpreters.
- As a parent - I don't know what resources could be available to me. I need you to figure that out - and publish it somewhere we can find it or have someone we can call with questions.
- Get in partnership with Staying Connected 2.0 FB group.
- Cultural relevance training from Deaf Community
- Important to have a lens to the intersectionality of race, gender and poverty with populations who identify as sensory diverse.
- Think about accessibility right from the beginning, not at the end. Then it's too late. There needs to be an accessibility checklist for every event.
- a lot of feedback has already been provided to HRM in many different forums not sure what additional feedback is needed. The issue is about implementing the recommendations for accessibility.
- Bring the papers/pen, type on the notes from the smartphones, VRI, gestures, and stop being freaked out.
- Hire more Deaf, blind or hard of hearing people! And make sure to bring in interpreters.
- It would be good to somehow identify recreation staff who have ASL (American Sign Language) skills, upon request. So that a child can work with that particular person... either as an instructor, camp counsellor, or one-on-one support.

**5. Would you be willing to be contacted to discuss this topic further? Your additional feedback will help to support how Parks & Recreation delivers recreation services to the Deaf and hard of hearing community.**

- Yes (75.57%)
- No

**6. Please share any other feedback.**

- Asking is the first step. 🗋️ Next is asking refined questions. Also, when events are accessible, ADVERTISE IT! People are desperate to get out, engage, connect, but they will not come if it's not inclusive. Advertise inclusive events loud and proud weeks beforehand so people have time to work it into their calendars. 👍
- Yes, please discuss with a couple of deaf and hard of hearing people for consultations so nothing is missed or overlooked.
- This survey is not accessible to the Deaf &HoH community who use ASL and may not be fluent in English. This survey is a barrier by not being interpreted by a Deaf Interpreter in ASL, and there is no opportunity for Deaf or HoH users to leave video messages with their feedback in ASL, their first language. Because of this, your survey is going to miss a big portion of the Deaf community.
- I am still new to the HRM area and have not seen any posting about anything accessible.
- Deaf and hard of hearing community Deafblind community Blind of partially sighted community Neuro-diverse community All these communities should be invited to the planning table as universal design for access benefits everyone. Individuals with lived experience are the experts, and there are excellent community partners who can be approached to access appropriate and expert information.
- Please educate staff about hiring ASL interpreters when requested.
- Thank you for creating this survey! Amazing!

## HEARING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

### CANADA VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)

Video Relay Services (VRS) is a free to use, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week basic telecommunications service that enables people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and who use sign language to communicate with voice telephone users. VRS has American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ), English, and French speaking interpreters on staff to accommodate conversations in all four languages.

#### How VRS is Used

- The customer (sign language user) connects to a VRS operator using internet-based videoconferencing.
- The VRS operator then places a voice telephone call to the other party and relays the conversation from sign language to voice and vice versa.

Hearing callers (callers who are not Deaf, hard of hearing, and use sign language) cannot register for Canada VRS applications (app), but they may call registered customers.

**Cost:** Free

#### Manuals:

[SRV Canada VRS APP User Manual \(PC and MAC\)](#)

SRV Canada VRS User Manual (Mobile Applications)

### COMMUNICATION ACCESS REALTIME TRANSLATION (CART)

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is the live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text so that individuals can read what is being said in group settings and at personal appointments on a laptop or a larger screen. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely, in both English and French, via a secure website

#### How CART works

A professional CART writer transcribes the spoken word into written English or French text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time software. The text is then displayed on a small screen, such as a laptop computer, or projected onto a large screen for classrooms, conferences or meetings.

When CART is provided on-site the writer is on location for the meeting or event.

When CART is provided remotely:

- a writer has access to the meeting from an off-site location
- deaf or hard of hearing individuals log onto a secure website that carries the transmission
- users can access the service from single or multiple locations
- CART transmissions can be displayed on a laptop, large monitor or LCD projector for the benefit of all participants

**Cost:** TBD

## GOOGLE LIVE TRANSCRIBE

Live Transcribe is a free android app that enables people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to have conversations easily and communicate in the moment. The app captures speech and sound, transcribing into text, with responses that can be typed as text.

### How Google Live Transcribe is Used

- Front desk staff will open the app and hold the tablet to the sound source.
- The app will immediately start transcribing what is heard in large letters in the app. If the app hears any noises (such as coughing) it will identify that sound in the bottom left corner.
- The customer can then type in a response.

**Cost:** Free

## VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING (VRI)

VRI is a fee-based interpreting service that lets customers communicate with others either in the same room or remotely using video interpretation services.

VRI is especially useful for scenarios such as: hospital or health care situations, business meetings and more. When you hire a VRI service, you are getting high quality interpreting services just like having an in-person interpreter. There are many VRI companies available across Canada.

## MESSAGE RELAY SERVICES (MRS)

Message relay services enable people with a hearing or speech disability to make and receive telephone calls via text with the assistance of a relay operator. In an MRS call, the relay operator communicates with the person who has a hearing or speech disability via text and with the other party via voice

## TELETYPEWRITER (TTY) RELAY SERVICE

TTY relay service is offered to all home phone subscribers in Canada. In a TTY relay service call, a person with a hearing or speech disability uses a TTY and dials 7-1-1 to reach a relay operator. A TTY is a telephone-typewriter hybrid that transmits text-based messages to another TTY over the telephone network. Conversely, the other party may call the person with a disability by dialing a toll-free number (1-800-855-0511) to reach a TTY relay operator.

## INTERNET PROTOCOL (IP) RELAY SERVICE

IP relay service is offered to all subscribers of home or mobile phone service in Canada. In an IP relay service call, a person with a hearing or speech disability uses an Internet-enabled device (e.g., computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone) to reach a relay operator by logging into the IP relay provider's web portal. Conversely, the other party may call the person with a disability by dialing a toll-free number to reach an IP relay operator.

## FREQUENCY MODULATED SYSTEM (FM SYSTEM)

FM systems use microphones and receivers (including hearing aids), to help individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing hear better and reduce background noise. FM Systems are common in school settings.

### **Types of microphones used:**

- Table-top microphone: When placed in the center of a table, these mics will pick up all the voices at the table. These are suitable for conference rooms or quiet restaurants. Some feature omnidirectional sound, picking up sounds in all directions.
- Clip-on or lapel microphones: These hang around a person's neck on a lanyard or are attached to the speaker's shirt at chest-level (within six inches of the speaker's mouth for the strongest possible speech signal).
- Handheld: This type of microphone can be passed around.
- Boom microphone: These microphones hang off the ear, positioned about three inches away from the face.

### **Types of receivers used:**

- Ear-level receivers: Ear-level receivers can be attached to hearing aids and cochlear implant processors so that Deaf and hard of hearing people can receive the sound signal directly. Sometimes referred to as a "hearing aid boot," ear-level receivers are the most integrated solution for people who wear hearing aids.
- NeckLoop receivers: This type of receiver, also called an induction loop, is worn around the neck and transmits the signal to hearing aids via electromagnetic energy. This receiver requires the use of a telecoil in the hearing aid(s). For people with typical hearing, they can be attached to headphones.
- Loudspeakers: Sounds can also be transmitted to loudspeakers throughout a space.
- Body-worn receiver: Body-worn receivers can be slipped into a pocket or clipped to a waistband. Although bulkier, they are portable. Paired with traditional headphones, they are a perfect solution for someone who does not wear hearing aids or is temporarily without hearing aids during a repair. Physicians often use this type of receiver to talk with patients who have hearing loss, but don't wear hearing aids.

**Cost:** FM Systems have a wide price range. They can cost as low as \$150 and go as high as several thousand dollars.

## **HEARING LOOPS**

### **1-TO-1 HEARING LOOPS**

1-to-1 hearing loops are installed in environments where two people are conversing, typically from opposing sides of a counter, desk, or other furnishing. A microphone on the side where a staff member is located and is connected to a hearing loop. Sound captured by the microphone is converted to magnetic impulses and transmitted to the patron's side of the counter through the hearing loop. Hearing aid wearers can switch their hearing aids to the T position to pick up the impulses, which are converted back to sound.

1-to-1 hearing loops amplify speech captured by the microphone and not the rest of the background and ambient noise, making them very effective in helping people with hearing loss converse freely.

### **LARGE AREA HEARING LOOPS**

Sound sources (speech, music, etc.) are connected to an induction loop driver. The driver converts the sound to magnetic impulses, which are transmitted along cables which run around or throughout the area

where end-users are. These signals are picked up by telecoils embedded in most standard hearing aids. Because only the intended sounds are encoded, end-users only hear the sound that are intended. Loud and distracting background sounds are not picked up by the driver and are therefore not amplified by the large area hearing loop system.

**Cost:** Small room installations may cost between \$5,000 - \$10,000. Typical installations costs for larger venues such as small auditoriums, senior centers, churches, etc. range between \$11,000 - \$35,000.

## INFRARED HEARING SYSTEMS

Infrared hearing systems are designed using the same infrared light technology commonly used in TVs and other types of remote controls. Sound picked up by a microphone is converted to light signals, which are flooded over a room or other settings. Users wear specially designed listening devices pick up those light signals and convert them back into sound that the listener can hear. Sound is delivered from the receiver to the ear via a headset or to the hearing aid / cochlear T-coil coupler via a personal inductive neckloop.

As infrared light cannot penetrate objects, only those in the same space as the transmitter can pick up the light signals and hear what is being said, making them ideal for applications where privacy is important.

**Evaluation Outcome Measures**

The pilot program will be evaluated at the mid way point to ensure that it is reaching the Deaf communities and hard of hearing individuals. If the targets are not being reached, the working group will come back together to ensure that the community is aware and being consulted in an appropriate manner. Outcome measures will also be re-evaluated at the midway point of the pilot program.

Category	Expected Outcomes and Measuring Success
<b>Community Led Consultation and Planning</b>	<b>Expected Outcome:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in community feedback and participation from initial community consultation in 2022</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome Measure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working group will consist of at least one member of the Deaf community to ensure first voice representation</li> <li>• Community consultations will take place with several community organization that serve Deaf individuals</li> <li>• Community consultation will take place in both English and American Sign Language to increase diversity of response</li> </ul>
<b>Access to Recreation Services and Programming</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in use of interpreter for individuals</li> <li>• Increase in use of interpreters for Parks and Recreation programs and Events</li> <li>• Use of technology specific to hard of hearing and Deaf individuals in identified recreation centre front desks</li> <li>• Use of technology specific to hard of hearing and Deaf individuals in specific Recreation programs and events</li> </ul>
	<b>Outcome Measure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the midway point of the pilot program, there will increase of 10 people that have used the interpreter services. If there have not been at least ten people to use the service for recreation programs, a broader communication plan will be put into place</li> <li>• By the midway point of the pilot program, there will be at least 3 recreation programs or events that book and advertise having ASL interpreters present</li> <li>• By the midway point of the pilot program, the technology at the front desk to assist with communication will be used at least 3 times</li> <li>• By the midway point of the pilot program, technology specific to Deaf or hard of hearing individuals will be used at least 4 times</li> </ul>
<b>Training for Staff</b>	<b>Expected Outcome:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in staff training specific to technology for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals</li> <li>• Increase in resources for staff dealing with customers on the front lines</li> <li>• Increase in staff who are fluent in ASL</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Outcome Measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least half of the front desk staff and administrative assistants at designated recreation centres \will be trained in technology specific to the Deaf and hard of hearing by the mid way point of the pilot program.</li> <li>• Resources will be created and delivered to all recreation programming staff specific to communication with Deaf and hard of hearing individuals by the mid way point of the pilot program</li> <li>• Cost and availability of ASL courses will be explored by staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication Plan</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication plan will reflect the Deaf and hard of hearing community and its primary language (ASL)</li> <li>• Increase contact with community groups to ensure communication is delivered effectively</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outcome Measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in requesting interpreters or technology will increase by at least 10 people by the midway point</li> <li>• At least 3 community groups that serve Deaf individuals will be consulted in the communications plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnership and Funding Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Expected Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner organizations with similar mandates to serve the Deaf community and hard of hearing individuals will be included in all levels of planning</li> <li>• Partner organization will share recreation program offerings and assist in creating cultural component programs and communications.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outcome Measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 3 community groups that serve Deaf individuals will be consulted</li> <li>• Partner organizations will share social media posts or posters regarding recreation programs at least 30 times by the mid way point</li> </ul>