

Courtroom Accessibility

Supporting People with Hearing Loss



In Newfoundland and Labrador, courtrooms are required to be accessible to individuals with disabilities, including people who are hard of hearing. Created in collaboration with the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA-NL), this resource outlines strategies for reducing communication barriers, explains the duty to accommodate, and provides guidance for creating more inclusive and accessible court proceedings.

Access to Meaningful Participation

The legal system must serve everyone equally. When people with hearing loss cannot fully access courtroom proceedings, they are denied equal participation in a system meant to protect their rights. Meaningful access to communication and information is essential to fairness and equal justice under the law.

The Duty to Accommodate

Courts have a legal obligation to provide support or make alternative arrangements for people with disabilities, up to the point of undue hardship. Supports and arrangements could include:

- ✓ Providing assistive listening devices (FM systems, hearing loops)
- ✓ Providing meeting minutes or plain-language summaries
- ✓ Allowing access to captioning or text-to-speech apps on personal devices

Inclusive Best Practices

- ✓ Arrange seating in a circle or square to keep participants close together and maintain clear sightlines for lip reading
- ✓ Minimize or eliminate background noise and ensure the space is well lit
- ✓ Use group listening systems (e.g., WiFi streams and DM systems)
- ✓ Reserve seats in the front for people with hearing loss and other disabilities

Resources and Support

- Speak with your lawyer, the Crown attorney, or Victim Services about any disability-related accommodations or support you may need in the courtroom
- CHHA-NL provides a wide range of programs and services to support individuals with hearing loss in Newfoundland and Labrador. Questions? Contact: 1-888-753-3224 | info@chha-nl.ca
- Having difficulty participating or accessing accommodations? Contact humanrights@gov.nl.ca

