

Courtroom Accessibility

Supporting People with Hearing Loss



In Newfoundland and Labrador, courtrooms must be accessible to people with disabilities, including those who are hard of hearing. This ensures equal access to justice. This resource highlights ways to remove communication barriers, explains the duty to accommodate, shares best practices, and outlines supportive resources when barriers are experienced.

Removing Information and Communication Barriers

The legal system must serve everyone equally. When people with hearing loss can't access or understand courtroom proceedings, they are excluded from the very system meant to protect them. True justice requires fairness in both law and process, which includes the ability to fully communicate and access information.

The Duty to Accommodate

Courts have a legal obligation to provide supports 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

Looking to file an inquiry about accommodation barriers?

Contact: humanrights@gov.nl.ca.

Best Practices for Hearing Accessibility

- ✓ Ensure close proximity and clear sightlines for lip reading (e.g., circle or square seating)
- ✓ Reduce 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

Finding Support

Talk to your lawyer, the crown attorney, or Victim Services to discuss any disability-related supports you may need while in the courtroom.

The **Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL)** advocates for and supports people with hearing loss across the province.

Questions? Contact: 1-888-753-3224 | info@chha-nl.ca.