

Communication Intermediaries:

Providing Support to People with Aphasia in Police, Legal, and Justice Situations



Life's a Conversation

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Disclosures

- Relevant Financial Relationships:
 - Receives consultation fees from the Aphasia Institute and from Communication Disabilities Access Canada
- Relevant Nonfinancial Relationships:
 - None



Access to Justice for People with Aphasia

People with speech, language, and communication disabilities need support to:

- report crimes
- respond to charges
- testify in court

People with communication disabilities are more likely to suffer physical, mental, and sexual abuse as a result of their inability to respond to the incidents.

As well, they have difficulties in reporting the crime and testifying.



Access to Justice for People with Aphasia in Canada

A Communication Intermediary is a specially trained speech-language pathologist who:

- Allows the victim/witness/accused to communicate as accurately, completely, and coherently as possible
- Is impartial and neutral, not an advocate or a coach

Communication Intermediary services are required in criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings, as well as in interactions with counsel.

Communication Disabilities Access Canada has trained 250 speech-language pathologists to work as Communication Intermediaries.



Working with Persons who have Aphasia as a Communication Intermediary

Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™) is a communication framework that works well in this context.

Challenges within justice settings:

- Key words and pictographic images may need to be prepared and approved in advance.
- Yes/No answers may need to be repeated and verified. Issues related to consent can be problematic.
- Verbal answers that are inaccurate but intelligible can be misleading.



Working with Persons who have Aphasia as a Communication Intermediary

Access to justice for persons with Aphasia presents a unique challenge.

- Canada has established a framework for training and accessing Communication Intermediaries, but significant barriers remain
- The U.K. includes Registered Intermediaries within the Ministry of Justice for vulnerable victims and witnesses

Goal: Create an **International Community of Practice** for *Speech-Language Pathologists* working as **Communication Intermediaries** in the area of *Aphasia*

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