

Augmentative Communication & Writing Aids (ACWA) Program

The Augmentative Communication & Writing Aids Program (ACWA) at Surrey Place is a specialized Augmentative and Alternative Communication clinic providing service to people with a developmental disability. ACWA was designated as a *General Level* clinic by the Assistive Devices Program of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in March 2007. AAC includes both face-to-face and written communication.

Face-to-Face Communication

People who cannot speak or have difficulty speaking may use symbolic communication including facial expressions, pictures, symbols, sign language, objects, gestures, written words, drawing, communication boards, books and/or Speech-Generating Devices to help them get their message across.

Written Communication

People who have difficulty writing may be helped by using computer adaptations (e.g., adapted mouse, word prediction software, alternate keyboards) to meet their writing needs (e.g. writing lists, letters, journaling, homework). These adaptations are intended as a replacement for using a pen and paper, or standard computer system for writing.

The ACWA Team

Our team includes Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Communicative Disorders Assistants, and a Program Manager.

Our Services

Services in ACWA may include the following:

- Assessment of communication needs and ability to use AAC
- Assessment of access for face-to-face or written communication aid
- Development of an AAC system with the client and caregivers
- Technical training for clients and caregivers
- Coaching on communication strategies and AAC implementation
- Information and support to help clients with funding for communication aids
- Education & resources for Surrey Place programs as well as community Speech-Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists

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Becoming an ACWA Client

ACWA is part of Surrey Place's Developmental Disabilities programs. It is available to people of all ages who have a diagnosis of developmental disability and live in the City of Toronto. Clients are referred to the ACWA Program by a **Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)** and/or **Occupational Therapist (OT)** in the community or the developmental age programs at Surrey Place. Individuals referred to the ACWA Program have more complex communication needs or require access to more complex communication aids than can be prescribed by S-LPs or OTs in the community

People referred to the ACWA Program must go through the regular intake process to become a client in the appropriate age program:

- **Infancy & Early Childhood Program:** ages 0-6 with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of Developmental Disability.
- **Children & Youth Program:** ages 6-17 with a confirmed diagnosis of Developmental Disability; referrals must be made by a school board SLP or OT.
- **Adult Program:** ages 18+ and registered with Developmental Services Ontario.

Clients who are new to Surrey Place or who have not had services from Surrey Place in the past year should call 416 925 5141 and you will be directed to an intake service coordinator to discuss your needs. If you are currently a Surrey Place client, you should contact your primary clinician to discuss your communication concerns and needs.

If you have any questions about ACWA and AAC services at Surrey Place, please contact the Augmentative Communication & Writing Aids Program manager at 416 925 5141 ext. 2467.