

Access, Inclusion and Participation in the Halton Community: A Deaf Perspective on Barriers and Solutions



Prepared by

Halton Deaf Action Group

October 2009

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Acknowledgements

The Halton Deaf Action Group would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations and agencies for their contribution of time, expertise and financial support:

PAH! Mental Health Service for Deaf Children

The Canadian Hearing Society: Peel/Halton/Dufferin Branch

The Bob Rumball Association For The Deaf

Halton Region Health Department

Halton Region Social and Community Services Department

Special thanks to the E. C. Drury Secondary School for the Deaf, the E. C. Drury Secondary School for the Deaf Student Parliament and grade 11 student, Graham Forsey for their assistance in organizing the youth focus group.

The Halton Deaf Action Group (HDAG) includes representation from Halton Region's Health and Social and Community Services Departments. Staff from these two departments provided support and assistance to HDAG in organizing the Community Forum and Youth Focus Group, and in coordinating the production of this report. The recommendations included in this report, however, reflect the views of the participants in the community events and the individuals and service providers on HDAG. The recommendations are not those of the Regional Municipality of Halton and may not reflect its views or policies.

Deaf agencies participate on HDAG and provided support and assistance to HDAG in organizing the Community Forum and Youth Focus Group, and in coordinating the production of this report, however, the recommendations included in this report, may not reflect the views or policies of these Deaf agencies.

Notes to the reader:

- For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to use a capital letter “D” in the word “Deaf” when referring to a people or culture (native ASL users, oral Deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf with cochlear implants, etc.).
- Use of this document as a resource does not imply all Deaf issues are being addressed. Community needs change and working with the Deaf community is the best way to ensure you are meeting their needs.
- Deaf people live and travel throughout Canada. Although many of the participants in the community consultations are residents of Halton, some experiences shared may be from other municipalities and provinces.

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Executive Summary

Deaf people have their own unique and rich culture and want to participate fully in community life as family, friends, neighbours, employers, employees, volunteers and citizens, and to have access to services. However they often experience many challenges in doing so. A consequence is that our community loses a valuable resource.

The Halton Deaf Action Group (HDAG) is a community partnership of deaf and hearing individuals and groups. Our mission is to strengthen Deaf access, inclusion and contributions to community. This report – *Access, Inclusion and Participation in the Halton Community: A Deaf Perspective on Barriers and Solutions* -- is a summary of findings from two Deaf community consultations and is being distributed throughout Halton.

We hope that this report will be a resource to:

- improve communication and understanding between the Deaf and hearing communities in Halton
- develop strategies for access to services, inclusion and participation in all aspects of community life in Halton for the Deaf community
- raise awareness and offer suggestions of actions organizations can take to be more inclusive of the deaf community in Halton
- educate the hearing public to the needs of the Deaf community and how to accommodate those needs
- work in partnership with Halton communities as advocates for the Deaf and their rights
- provide a guideline for common language and terms used when supporting the Deaf community: see Appendix 1 for glossary of terms.

We recognize that making Halton inclusive and accessible to the Deaf community is an ambitious goal. We know that within Halton, Regional and Municipal Accessibility and Diversity Advisory Committees are working to increase access, inclusion and participation for the diverse communities in Halton. The Halton Deaf Action Group would like to support and augment that work by giving a voice to a community that is often not heard. By raising awareness of the needs of the Deaf community, the Halton Deaf Action Group is taking the first step to improve access and communication between the Deaf and hearing communities in Halton.

More detailed explanations of challenges faced by the Deaf community and recommendations to help meet these challenges are outlined in this report. Highlighted below are some of the most significant issues this population faces and some ideas for our community to become more inclusive.

Note: It is important to consider that the needs of the Deaf are always changing. Working with the Deaf community, by involving them in ongoing consultation for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs, is the best way to ensure their needs are being met.

Why inclusion, participation and access are a challenge for the Deaf:

- People in the Deaf community become insular and isolated without quality communication. Connectedness to family, school and community is impaired when we are not able to communicate in deep and meaningful ways.
- Assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes held by the hearing community perpetuate barriers to a deaf person's access to services and inclusion in community life (e.g. misconception that English is their first language).
- Visual communication technology used by the Deaf is not incorporated into how businesses and service providers communicate.
- There is a lack of community knowledge regarding the importance, etiquette and process of accessing and using qualified American Sign Language English interpreters when servicing deaf consumers.
- There is little or no involvement of the Deaf community by business, government or service providers in ongoing assessment and evaluation of access, participation and inclusion policies, promising practices, actions and technologies.

We need strategies that allow deaf and hearing people to have conversations that enable everyone to feel a part of a family and part of the community.

How can the community be more inclusive:

- Create strategies that allow deaf and hearing people to have conversations that enable everyone to feel a part of a family and part of the community.
- Build public awareness of Deaf culture, needs and deaf people as resources to foster respect, access and inclusion.
- Incorporate appropriate strategies and technologies to improve communication with the Deaf.
- Recommend that it become standard community practice to use American Sign Language (ASL) English interpreters to facilitate communication, access, and inclusion for the Deaf.
- Involve the Deaf community in consultation around policy development, implementation and evaluation.

A recurrent theme from Deaf stories shared at the community forum and focus group was about Deaf feeling disconnected from their social support networks. Youth lamented many times that they were not able to communicate on a deep and meaningful level with hearing parents or other important hearing community and family members. There are a number of factors that impact communication and the use of sign language, including access to sign language instruction, practice to develop vocabulary and fluency, and deaf and hearing family members access to each other (i.e., if deaf child attends a residential school). We need strategies that allow deaf and hearing people to have conversations that enable everyone to feel a part of a family and part of the community.

The Public Health Agency of Canada lists Social Support Networks as an important determinant of health.

“Support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health. Such social support networks could be very important in helping people solve problems and deal with adversity, as well as in maintaining a sense of mastery and control over life circumstances. The caring and respect that occurs in social relationships, and the resulting sense of satisfaction and well-being, seem to act as a buffer against health problems.” Source: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/determinants/determinants-eng.php#social>

The Deaf Community in Halton

The Town of Milton, located within the Regional Municipality of Halton, has the largest of the four provincial schools for the Deaf in Ontario. As a result, the Region of Halton has a significant deaf population and deaf people live in every municipality in Halton.

As for broad numbers, there is little in the way of Canadian statistics on deaf Canadians. The Canadian Association of Deaf follows the standard comparison model between Canada and the United States, which assumes that statistics for Canada will be one-tenth of statistics for the U.S. (based on the fact that Canada has one-tenth the population of the U.S.). By this measure, Canada in the year 2006 would have roughly 3.1 million people with some degree of hearing loss. Of those 3.1 million people, one-tenth or roughly 310,000 would be culturally and linguistically deaf.

Halton Deaf Action Group (HDAG)

About Us

The Halton Deaf Action Group (HDAG) is a community partnership of deaf and hearing individuals and groups who are working together to increase Deaf access to services and inclusion and participation in community life in Halton.

The group formed in July 2007 when members of the Deaf community approached the Halton Region Health Department regarding access to community and health services. A group of six deaf individuals met with both the Health and Social & Community Services Departments. Their goal was to identify key stakeholders in an effort to form a working group to look at access, participation and inclusion issues for the Deaf community living in Halton.

From there, the Bob Rumball Association for the Deaf, The Canadian Hearing Society and PAH! Mental Health Service for Deaf Children were invited to participate in the effort. The working group vision was to take Deaf stories and solutions to Halton service providers and agencies. To that end, HDAG hosted the Halton Deaf Action Group Community Forum on September 18, 2008 and the Deaf Youth Focus Group on Access, Participation and Inclusion on June 17, 2009 (refer to Appendixes 2 & 3 respectively for more details about each forum).

Summary of Findings: Community Forum and Youth Focus Group

Barriers to Inclusion, Access, Participation

Barriers create inequality, cause stress, exclude and isolate, limit and/or deny participation and access, limit or silence deaf people's voice, create an invisible people and limit opportunities to achieve positive health outcomes.

At the community forum and the youth focus group, the deaf individuals shared many stories. General themes emerged at both events that were common to many of the stories. The youth also identified issues that are specific to their age group.

General themes for any age fell into the following four categories:

1. key challenges to access*
2. access to health care
3. access to local business, community and recreational services
4. access to and interactions with law enforcement agencies

* “The Key Challenges to Access” are highlighted below, separated into two sections: feedback from the overall deaf audience and feedback from the deaf youth audience. These challenges pertain to and cross all community sectors. The other three categories are specific to service sectors and can be viewed in Appendix 4, Summary of Service Sector Findings.

Key Challenges to Access

What Deaf people say

Deaf people experience similar types of challenges when trying to access services and participate in community life:

- **Connectedness to family, school and community is impaired when we are not able to communicate in deep and meaningful ways.**
 - A recurrent theme from Deaf stories shared at the community forum and youth focus group was about Deaf feeling disconnected from their social support networks. Youth lamented many times that they were not able to communicate on a deep and meaningful level with hearing parents or other important hearing community and family members. Without quality communication a deaf person can feel isolated and alone.
 - The hearing community has expressed interest in learning sign language. There are a number of factors that impact communication and the use of sign language, including:
 - access to sign language instruction
 - practice to develop vocabulary and fluency

- access to hearing and deaf family members (i.e., if Deaf child attends a residential school)
- **Assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes held by the hearing community perpetuate barriers to a deaf person's access to services and inclusion in community life.**
 - Communication is a major issue between deaf and hearing people as American Sign Language is the primary language of most deaf people. English is the second language of Deaf people, therefore to fully comprehend content, it is best to provide service and information in their native language, ASL.
 - There is also the misconception that the use of an ASL-English interpreter is only for the benefit the deaf person. Hearing individuals who do not understand sign language also benefit from the use of ASL-English interpreter services.
 - The community assumes that deaf people have free access to ASL interpreters and provide their own interpretation services. It is the responsibility of organizations, companies, and the public sector to ensure accessibility by providing ASL interpreters.
 - Service providers expect deaf people to lip read. English is a second language for deaf people. Some deaf people have limited English literacy skills. Some deaf people can lip read; however, lip reading can be difficult if someone has a mustache or an accent.
 - There is a lack of community knowledge about Deaf culture, needs of deaf people and how to provide access. This denies deaf people opportunities to contribute and be involved, access services and participate in community.
 - Attitude towards communication is important. When communication becomes a challenge between deaf and hearing people, due to the extra time required, the need for clarification, and use of tools (e.g., pen and paper; computer) outside of using voice, the outcome for hearing and deaf can be one of frustration, dissatisfaction, and/or no service being delivered.
 - There are still some misunderstandings and stereotypes about being deaf. Deafness does not mean that a person will have a physical and/or cognitive disability. Unfortunately this stereotype means that some deaf people experience discrimination that affects their opportunities for employment and participation in community (e.g., not getting a job; being bullied at school; being allowed on a sports team but not played).
- **Visual communication technology used by the deaf is not consistently incorporated into how businesses, service providers and schools communicate.**
 - Deaf people need to use visual communication tools like text messaging, video relay*, video programs, and email. Most businesses, government services, hospitals, doctor's offices, and community service providers continue to do business with the public by phone. Often exceptions are not made for the deaf (e.g., using automated phone options or leaving a voice mail to make/cancel an appointment). A number of deaf people have reported that some service providers' indicated that they are not able to communicate in writing or by email due to systemic policies.

*See Appendix 1 for glossary of terms.

- Video programming, whether it is television programming, movies, videotapes/DVDs, webcasts, or other technology, is not fully accessible to deaf people when there is no captioning.
- Often assistive devices in the public/business domain are broken, in disrepair, or outdated.
- Deaf people need quality note-taking tools. Note-taking technology transfers the spoken word onto a computer and printed page. It is not always available for deaf people. Sometimes the deaf are asked to receive photocopied or carbon papered notes from hearing people. The quality of handwritten notes varies. Quality is dependent upon the person's interpretation, spelling, legibility, clarity of copy and carbon, and also timeliness in which they are received. The outcome is that the quality of education and/or participation is diminished. This issue was raised a number of times in the youth focus group.
- Service providers need to ensure they communicate effectively and provide enough time for a deaf person to process the information to make an informed decision. When discussing technical, legal, medical, financial or other complex information, the quality of information is compromised if service providers depend only upon written or electronic communication tools (e.g., paper and pen, computers) or the use of someone who has some sign language, instead of using a qualified ASL-English interpreter.

Don't Forget: A Deaf person needs sufficient time to ensure they understand information conveyed in order to make an informed decision. Service providers need to ensure they communicate effectively and provide enough time for a deaf person to process the information to make an informed decision.

- **There is a lack of community knowledge regarding the importance, etiquette and process of accessing and using qualified American Sign Language English Interpreters when servicing deaf consumers.**
 - Family, friends and community people who know some sign language are still being asked to interpret for deaf people.
 - Service providers expect deaf clients to organize and pay for their own ASL-English interpreters.
- **There is little or no involvement of the Deaf community in ongoing assessment and evaluation of access, participation and inclusion policies, promising practices, actions and technologies.**
 - Often hotels, hospitals, doctor's offices, GO stations and public buildings do not use visual safety alarms or communication devices that inform and protect public safety (e.g., visual fire alarms, TTYs or LED display signs/monitors with visual read-outs for announcements).

What Deaf youth say

Although the youth focus group corroborated many of the key challenges identified in the community forum, there were three particular themes that were unique to the youth focus group:

- Connectedness
- Independence
- Informed decision-making

Being connected to family, school and community is of major importance to child and youth mental, physical, emotional and social health. Youth lamented many times that they were not able to communicate on a deep and meaningful level with hearing parents or other important hearing community and family members. Without quality communication a deaf person can feel isolated and alone.

Becoming independent of parents and caregivers is a developmental task for youth. Youth want opportunities to participate, volunteer, be seen as a resource, and valued by the community. This can be a challenge for all youth but in particular for deaf youth. Their interactions with their community are sheltered by their caregivers. They can also be sheltered by the hearing community members with whom they are trying to relate. This can slow their journey toward independence. Many youth said that they rely on their hearing parents to act and speak for them around medical issues, jobs, ongoing school, etc.

Making informed decisions was an issue identified by several deaf youth for both themselves and their hearing parents. Youth felt that often parents are not provided with all the available information to help them make decisions for their child about a range of issues (e.g., cochlear implants, schools, language instruction). Many of the youth said that they themselves were surprised at finding there was a School for the Deaf they could attend. Focus group youth felt that information provided to parents about cochlear implants is “hearing biased.” Youth said that not all cochlear implant procedures are successful at increasing hearing and that some people will still require an interpreter.

Other Important Considerations

- There is a shortage of ASL-English interpreters in the province of Ontario.
- There can be alienation from family members who know little sign language.
- Employment equity and inclusive workplaces are still an illusion for deaf people in Halton. Skills, experience and self confidence are often gained in the work place. However, there is unemployment and underemployment in the Deaf community and that means a deaf person has less opportunity to work and contribute to the community.

Recommendations and Solutions from the Deaf Community

The following recommendations came from the HDAG community and youth consultations to help build Deaf access, inclusion, and participation into the culture of all our institutions and communities.

1. **Develop strategies that allow deaf and hearing people to have meaningful conversations that enable everyone to feel a part of a family and part of the community.**

- Work with Deaf community, deaf service providers, like the Canadian Hearing Society, and hearing community to
 - Improve access to sign language instruction for families and community
 - Improve access to opportunities to practice and use sign language
 - Incorporate sign language and video communication for public messaging to better communicate with deaf citizens
 - Educate community members and municipal staff regarding the etiquette of working with the Deaf community (e.g. When communicating with a deaf person it is imperative to maintain eye contact with them. Look at the deaf person who is signing and not the ASL interpreter who is talking.)
 - If possible educate community members and municipal staff in basic sign language

2. **Build public awareness of Deaf culture, needs and deaf people as resources to foster respect, access and inclusion.**

- Recommend that policy makers and service providers use the Canadian Association of the Deaf (<http://www.cad.ca>) and the Canadian Hearing Society (<http://www.chs.ca>) as resources for understanding Deaf issues.
- Recommend that provincial, regional and municipal governments work together with the Deaf community to educate service providers and businesses about the technology and communication services and strategies that work to support deaf in access, inclusion and participation.
- Recommend that there be a symbol on a deaf person's driver's licence to indicate to police that the person is deaf.

3. **Incorporate appropriate strategies and technologies to improve communication with the Deaf.**

This is crucial in facilitating Deaf access, participation and inclusion, and connectedness to family, school and community. There is a reciprocal benefit if public service and business providers utilize appropriate communication technologies and strategies to engage the Deaf community.

- Recommend that service providers use communication strategies and appropriate technologies (e.g., Video communication, video blogging, text messaging, email) to ensure that services to Deaf people are timely and appropriate. For example, Trillium Hospital waiting room staff sends emails to deaf clients when it is time for them to be seen by medical staff.
- Recommend that businesses and service providers who use the telephone as a primary means of business and communication, provide other technology and

The language of most deaf Canadians is American Sign Language (ASL), not English.

communication options when communicating with the deaf (e.g., deaf people use text messaging, video relay, video programming, email).

- Recommend that plain language principles be used when creating written materials and information for the community in general and the Deaf community in particular.
- Recommend that service providers use deaf-oriented marketing services and tools to ensure that the Deaf community can receive and have access to information.
- Recommend that a Canadian Video Relay Service (VRS) be created. Video Relay Services allows a deaf or hard of hearing person to make a telephone call via an Internet video connection between the user and the relay center which is staffed with sign language interpreters. VRS thus allows conversations to occur at approximately normal speed with the benefit of being visually based, typically in sign language, for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

4. Recommend that it become standard community practice to use American Sign Language (ASL) English interpreters to facilitate communication, access, and inclusion for the Deaf.

“The language of most deaf Canadians is American Sign Language (ASL), not English. ASL is a visual language with its own grammar and syntax that is completely different from English. A sign language interpreter can bridge the communication gap between ASL and English” (Canadian Hearing Society, 2007). Source: <http://www.canadianhearingsociety.com/pdf/OIS.PDF>

“In keeping with Human Rights principles, accommodation is to be provided in a way that respects the individual’s dignity, which encompasses self-respect and self-worth, and entails such things as privacy, confidentiality, autonomy, and integrity. It recognizes that no two communication barriers are exactly the same and, therefore, each person is entitled to an accommodation that best suits his or her individual needs. Examples of individualized accommodation include ASL-English interpreting, real-time captioning, and computerized note-taking.” *The Canadian Hearing Society Position Paper on Accessibility and Accommodation* <http://www.chs.ca/en/documents-and-publications/chs-position-papers/index.php>

- There is a shortage of ASL interpreters in Ontario. The Deaf community recommends that the number of trained and accredited ASL-English interpreters graduating from Colleges is increased.
- An organization’s use of ASL interpreter services will depend upon the need of the Deaf community and the organization’s efforts to engage the Deaf. Below are some considerations:
 - Organizations engaging and providing service to many deaf clients may want to consider hiring on site ASL interpreters or negotiating use of a regular ASL interpreter service
 - Organizations not frequently accessed by deaf clients should know how to arrange for ASL interpreter services for Deaf clients when applicable
 - Organizations employing deaf people may want to consider employing on-site ASL interpreters services or negotiating use of a regular ASL interpreter service
 - Organizations wanting to be accessible should consider informing the Deaf community of their accessibility and have ASL interpreter services available

- Recommend that regional government and municipal governments collaborate in engaging and providing services to the Deaf community (e.g. using Deaf specific and Deaf friendly marketing).
- Recommend that regional government and municipal governments offer ASL-English interpreting for a range of community activities that allow deaf people full participation in civics and community: e.g., council and public meetings; parks and recreation programming; deaf participation on community committees; non-profit activities and organizations (e.g., volunteer training, etc.).
- Recommend that it become public policy that community and recreation groups using public facilities make their programs accessible and offer ASL-English interpreters for deaf.

5. Involve the Deaf community in consultation around policy development, implementation and evaluation.

Deaf consumers want and should be a part of helping agencies and institutions implement change.

- Recommend that service providers work with deaf people to identify barriers to access, inclusion and participation in their programs and services.
- Recommend that agencies and institutions work together with Deaf agencies and the Deaf community in adapting to, assessing and evaluating change. Deaf can help to pin point problems and ensure that the changes made are effective.
- Recommend that public policy regarding safety, building codes and design be adjusted so that new and renovated public and private buildings are universally accessible to deaf people (e.g., visual door bells, visual smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and LED display signs/monitors with visual read-outs for safety announcements and directions).

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

This quote and the terms below are from the Canadian Hearing Society <http://www.chs.ca>.

“Language is a powerful tool – it both shapes and is shaped by ideas, perceptions and attitudes. And it’s these very attitudes that can pose the most difficult barriers for people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing. The following terms describe people, their language of communication and self-identification. As an organization which serves these communities and educates the hearing public, we avoid using terms such as “hearing impaired” or “normal or abnormal hearing” or colloquialisms such as “falling on deaf ears.”

Oral deaf: This term is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Some deaf people use sign language such as American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) to communicate. Others use speech to communicate, using their residual hearing and hearing aids, communication devices or cochlear implants, and lip-reading or speech reading.

Culturally Deaf: This term refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture, and community of Deaf people, based on sign language. Deaf culture, indicated by a capital “D,” does not perceive hearing loss and deafness as a disability, but as the basis of a distinct cultural group. Culturally Deaf people may also use speech reading, gesturing, spoken language, and written English to communicate with people who do not sign.

Deafened: This term describes individuals who grow up hearing or hard of hearing and, either suddenly or gradually, experience a profound hearing loss. Deafened adults usually use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speech reading or sign language.

Hard of Hearing: This term is generally used to describe individuals whose hearing loss ranges from mild to severe, and occasionally profound. Hard of hearing people use speech and residual hearing to communicate, supplemented by communication strategies that may include speech reading, hearing aids, sign language and communication devices. The term “person with hearing loss” is increasingly used and preferred by this constituency.

Communication Tools:

Definitions below are from the Canadian Association of the Deaf www.cad.ca.

Video communication (video conferences, video mail, web-stream video, etc.) is one of the most important new developments for Deaf people, as it allows easy communication via Sign language. Video Relay Service (VRS) allows Deaf and hearing people to communicate in their own languages (Sign for the Deaf, and voice for the hearing).

Video Relay Services allows a deaf or hard of hearing person to make a telephone call via an Internet video connection between the user and the relay center which is staffed with sign language interpreters. VRS thus allows conversations to occur at approximately normal speed with the benefit of being visually based, typically in sign language, for deaf and hard of hearing consumers.

TTY: A **telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD)** is an electronic device for text communication via a telephone line, used when one or more of the parties has hearing or speech difficulties. Other names for TDD include **TTY** (telephone typewriter or teletypewriter, although TTY is

also a term used for teletypes in general), **text phone** (Common in Europe and the UK), and **minicom** (United Kingdom).

Bell Relay Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hearing impaired customers can access Bell Relay Service by using a TTY and dialling 711 or 1 800 267-6511. Hearing customers can call 1 800 855-0511 to speak to a Bell Relay Service operator.

VRI- video remote interpreting- uses hi-speed internet video technologies to access ASL sign language interpreting services without an interpreter on site. Captions are superimposed titles which print out the dialogue and sound effects of video programming. They are almost always closed (not visible on the screen without the assistance of a decoder machine or chip) rather than open (visible on the screen to all viewers).

Video blogging, sometimes shortened to vlogging, is a form of blogging for which the medium is video.

Appendix 2: Overview of the HDAG Community Forum

Date of Forum: Thursday, September 18, 2008

Purpose and Objectives

- To hear about and document Deaf experiences with access to services, participation and inclusion in community life in Halton
- To hear community solutions to challenges experienced by the Deaf community
- To share the findings from the forum with appropriate community institutions and agencies

Guidelines: Participants were asked to share stories that were current or continued to be relevant. Their confidentiality was assured and participants were asked not to use names in their stories.

Key questions asked to participants:

- Is Halton accessible? How? What's working? What's not working?
- Have you experienced discrimination living in Halton?
- Do you feel your health care provider is open to booking interpreters?
- Do you have trouble accessing services in Halton?
- How can Halton become more accessible?

Location

The Bob Rumball Association for the Deaf (BRAD), Milton

Who Came?

46 youth and adults and 13 children from the community attended the forum.

Other attendees of note:

- Arthur Rendall: City of Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Carole Sharp, John Beaudette, Marlene Schrock, Janet Davidson (Coordinator, Accessibility & Special Needs): Town of Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee:
- Chris Kenopic (Hamilton CHS): Town of Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Doris Baker: Chair of the Town of Oakville Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Joan Gallagher-Bell (Vice-Chair), Alan Jordan, Gabrielle Baldazzi (Senior Policy Advisor, Strategic Planning & Policy): Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Zerezghi Haile (Diversity Advisor): Halton Region Diversity Advisory Committee

Format

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. – **BBQ/SOCIAL** on the grounds of the BRAD

6:00 – 8:00 p.m. – **OPEN FORUM** - BRAD community room

How the Stories Were Documented:

- Hired the Canadian Hearing Society's Access Team (2 ASL interpreters, 1 Deaf interpreter, 1 Note taker with Laptop and LCD and projector screen)
- Used two tape recorders
- Signers Corner for those not comfortable speaking in front of others
- Two Masters of Ceremony to facilitate discussion and manage the time.

In addition to the Community Forum HDAG offered:

- Facebook page where Deaf people could video tape their stories
- Email to capture Deaf stories
- Invitation to attendees to be part of the Halton Deaf Action Group

Appendix 3: Overview of Youth Focus Group

Date of Focus Group: Wednesday, June 17, 2009

Purpose and Objectives

- To ask Deaf youth to tell their stories about access to services, and participation and inclusion in community life in Halton.
- To record Deaf youth's stories, opinions, suggestions and recommendations for improving Deaf access, inclusion and participation in community life in Halton.
- To include Deaf youth stories, opinions, suggestions and recommendations in the Halton Deaf Action Group Report: *Access, Inclusion and Participation in the Halton Community, A Deaf Perspective on Barriers and Solutions*.

Guidelines: Youth participants were asked to share stories that were current or continued to be relevant. Their confidentiality was assured and participants were asked not to use names in their stories. The purpose and objectives of the focus group were shared with participants.

Key questions asked to participants:

- Is Halton accessible to Deaf people? How? What's working? What's not working?
- Have you experienced discrimination living in Halton (participating in community activities, volunteer and recreation activities, medical services, educational services, employment, etc.)?
- Do you feel service providers, like your health care provider, recreation services, community businesses, educational service providers, are open to booking ASL interpreters, using Deaf friendly technology, etc.?
- Do you have trouble accessing services (medical, recreational, educational, employment, business, and community services) in Halton?
- How can Halton become more accessible to deaf people? How can the Halton community improve access, safety, inclusion, participation in community life in Halton (housing, employment, social activities, recreational activities and volunteer activities, etc.)?

Location

E.C. Drury Sr. School for the Deaf, Milton

Who Came?

Seven youth participated. Five youth from grades 10-12 participated in the focus group. Two youth provided stories at the beginning of the meeting but did not stay for focus group.

Format

The focus group was held after school at 3:30 p.m. in a classroom at E.C. Drury Sr. School for the Deaf. The focus group was organized by a Deaf student with the support of his principal.

How the Stories Were Documented:

Focus group facilitated by a Deaf member of the HDAG committee. Another HDAG member participated as a witness with her son. School for the Deaf provided two ASL interpreters. Halton Region provided two Public Health Nurses as note taker and support to the facilitator. Note taker used laptop and LCD with projector screen so that youth could see their stories as they were being recorded.

Follow Up

Participants were asked if they would like a copy of the completed report. They indicated that they would like a paper and electronic copy to be sent to their school. Copies will be sent to student leaders and to the principal.

Appendix 4: Summary of Service Sector Findings

Access to Health Care¹

Doctors' Offices, Hospitals, etc.

- Clients are limited to 15 minutes in doctor's office – communication takes longer with the Deaf. Fifteen minutes is not enough if you do not have an ASL-English interpreter and have to communicate in a second language and in writing.
- Some deaf people have experienced frustration, anger, annoyance or refusals from doctors or medical personnel when a deaf person asks them to take notes or write things out during an appointment. Sometimes a hearing person will comply but the handwriting is illegible, and the deaf person will have to ask them to clarify. This can lead to further reaction from the hearing person. This gives the feeling to the deaf person that they are not worth communicating with. The whole interaction is a set up for conflict.
- There is always a question of whether the doctor will be willing to book an ASL-English interpreter.
- The youth identified that when they have gone to the hospital, there are no interpreters available.
- Some doctor's offices don't know how or are unwilling to accommodate the use of Bell Relay in booking an appointment. The deaf person is made to come in person to the office to make an appointment or ask a question.
- Some deaf people are able to lip read, however, lip reading can be difficult if a doctor or medical personnel has a mustache, accent, or wears a mask. This issue was also identified in the youth focus group.
- During SARS, hospitals only permitted ER clients one support person – a deaf person had to choose between having a professional ASL interpreter with them or their support person (friend/family member) – this denied a deaf person personal support during a time when they were in pain.
- Deaf person waiting in ER to be seen, a shift change at the hospital occurred and staff did not communicate that client in wait room was deaf – new staff called the deaf person's name – deaf person did not hear and missed their name/number being called – this delayed services being provided.
- Some hospitals use voicemail to cancel appointments with the deaf but deaf people do not get those messages.
- Intake forms in hospitals, doctors' and dental offices ask for phone numbers. They need to ask for TTY numbers and email addresses.
- If there is a referral made the doctor needs to inform the hospital, lab, etc., that the person is deaf and needs to be informed of appointment times and cancellations using email or text message.

Cochlear Implants

Youth focus group members discussed that there is not sufficient information provided regarding the social and medical pros and cons of cochlear implants. They also stated that parents are not always provided other options such as schools available to the Deaf. When one youth was born, his parents were informed about availability of cochlear implants and regular school, but no mention about signing and Deaf schools. The information provided to parents is "hearing biased" and not all services available for Deaf are discussed. The youth stated that not all cochlear implant procedures are successful at increasing hearing. Most people who have had cochlear implants still require an ASL-English interpreter.

¹ Deaf people live and travel throughout Canada. Although many of the participants in the community consultations were residents of Halton, some experiences shared may be from other municipalities and provinces.

Access to Local Business, Community and Recreational Services¹

Community Issues:

Community businesses and service providers often do not know:

- about the Canadian Hearing Society and its services
 - how to organize ASL-English interpreter services
 - that it is their responsibility to be fully accessible to the Deaf and hard of hearing
 - about or how to use assistive devices (email or text messaging, TTY, Video services, etc.) that would enable or enhance communication between their deaf client/customer and themselves
- A client discussed her experiences with bank services. She attended a workshop on being debt free where ASL-English interpretation services were provided. The client learned from the deaf participants that most banks did not consider these ASL services important. However, when ASL-English interpretation services for the Deaf are not provided for workshops, mortgage and loan consultations, etc. important information and opportunities for clarifying questions can be compromised or lost making it difficult for a deaf consumer to make informed decisions.
 - When deaf people get a loan or mortgage for their home, any details that need a lot of explaining require an interpreter.
 - Often hotels, hospitals, doctor's offices, GO stations and public buildings do not have the following safety and communication tools: visual fire alarms, TTYs or LED display signs/monitors with visual read-outs for announcements.
 - Often assistive devices in the public/business domain are broken, in disrepair, or out dated
 - Related Experiences: Deaf person asks to use the hospital TTY but device is broken, a year later same device still broken; movie theater captioning device not working properly but deaf still had to pay full price for admission.
 - One youth stated that he has a hearing guide dog. His dog was refused entry into a restaurant. There is a lack of public awareness of hearing guide dogs, especially in restaurants. The youth felt it was discrimination and harassment by being denied access to the restaurant. It becomes the onus of the deaf person to educate business people about guide dogs.
 - One youth went into a convenience store. He wrote down the item he wanted and the store clerk could not read what was written. The youth wrote it down again and waited while the clerk served another customer. When the clerk came back to him, the youth stated that the clerk seemed irritated and eventually gestured to "just get out of here."
 - On a positive note, deaf people did have stories about successful interactions and communications with some business and service providers (e.g., communicating in writing on paper and computer with bank personnel).

Recreation:

- Families looking for activities for their deaf children and deaf people looking for activities for themselves ask to have ASL-English interpreters booked. Often community services and recreational programs do not provide ASL-English interpreter services for the Deaf. Deaf can participate in the program or join a group but without ASL interpreter provision their quality of participation and inclusion are poor. This finding was validated by the youth focus group members.
- Youth have asked for recreation and sports activities where ASL-English interpretation services would be provided. This would allow deaf students to have access to instruction and social participation of being on a team, which they would not receive if no interpreters were provided.

¹ Deaf people live and travel throughout Canada. Although many of the participants in the community consultations are residents of Halton, some experiences shared may be from other municipalities and provinces.

- One youth expressed that being on a team with hearing people allows you to develop your skills better because you are playing against people with a range of skill levels. When you are able to pull from a larger population of people, you get a range of skill levels to play against, and this helps you to develop your own skills. The youth asked to be included in the league of the HDSB to have more teams to play against.
- One youth talked about when he played on a football team. The student had paid his \$80 fee to participate on the team. Out of 13 games he only played one game. The youth stated that the coach “thought I had hit my head and become deaf.” The youth ended up quitting the team.
- Video programming -- whether it is television programming, movies, videotapes/DVDs, webcasts, or other technology -- is not fully accessible to deaf people because there is no captioning.
- TVs on airplanes do not have closed captioning so the Deaf are unable to learn about passenger safety from the stewardess demonstration or participate in watching a movie.

Access in Schools¹

Youth had a lot to say about their experiences in school. Their descriptions of their experiences fell into overarching themes for all deaf people and are found under the Key Challenges and Key Recommendations in the report.

- Youth expressed challenge of being in a hearing school where the class size is large. Interactions with others can work better one on one, but in large groups can be frustrating.

Access to and Interactions with Law Enforcement Agencies¹

Recommend that there be a symbol on a deaf person’s driver’s licence to indicate to police that the person is deaf.

It is important to take the time and to use the appropriate communication strategies to ensure that your message is heard correctly and properly understood by the police officer and also by the deaf person when communicating with each other. Some of the stories shared at the deaf forum highlighted communication challenges that occurred between deaf individuals and law enforcement officers.

Related experiences:

- A Deaf person requests a Security Clearance check for employment from a District police station and experienced frustration after being directed to multiple police agencies in the GTA and then back to the District Headquarters in her region. This left the deaf person with the impression that police were not interested in assisting them with their request. In the deaf person’s words: “police were not interested in dealing with me as a deaf person.”
- Deaf people use their hands to communicate, and if asked by the officer to place their hands on the wheel of their vehicle, it inhibits their ability to communicate in sign language or in writing. Communication between deaf people and police officers can be challenging during a service call which requires the deaf person to place their hands on the wheel of their vehicle.
- Deaf people try to communicate in their second language (English) in writing, but when grammatical errors or other miscommunication occurs, it can create confusion between the officer and the deaf person. A deaf person stated they used incorrect grammar when relating what had occurred to a police officer, and the deaf person’s grammatical error made it appear as if they were at fault.
- Some deaf people report that some police officers have refused to communicate with them in writing
- Deaf people have reported that some law enforcement agencies have policies to not use email as a form of communication.

¹ Deaf people live and travel throughout Canada. Although many of the participants in the community consultations are residents of Halton, some experiences shared may be from other municipalities and provinces.

- Sometimes hearing children are asked to interpret for deaf parents. A police officer stops a driver who is deaf. The officer asks the child in the back seat to interpret for them. The deaf driver felt that the officer did not try to communicate with them, and was upset the officer did not get their permission as the parent to speak with their child. The deaf driver felt the child was placed in an adult role.

For more information about services provided for the deaf in Halton, please see *Appendix 6: Deaf Culture Training within Halton Regional Police Training*.

Appendix 5: Resources

Regional and Municipal

- **Halton Region – Accessibility** <http://www.halton.ca/About/accessibility.htm>
- **City of Burlington – Accessibility** <http://cms.burlington.ca/page30.aspx>
- **Town of Milton – Accessibility** <http://www.milton.ca/residents/community/accessibility.htm>
- **Town of Halton Hills – Accessibility** <http://www.haltonhills.ca/committees/accessibility.php>
- **Town of Oakville – Accessibility** <http://www.oakville.ca/accessibility.htm>
- **Halton Region: Building Bridges - Opening Worlds: Halton Region’s Inclusion Strategy 2009 – 2011** http://infocom.halton.local/Research/Haltons_Inclusion_Strategy_web.pdf

Province of Ontario

- **Accessibility Directorate of Ontario** <http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario>
- **Access ON website** has information and tools relating to the accessible customer service. <http://www.accesson.ca/ado/splash.htm>
- **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm
- **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Guide:** http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/what/AODA_guide.htm
- **Deaf Access Simcoe - Muskoka** <http://www.deafaccess.ca/interpreting.html>
- **Working with Interpreters at George Brown College** - PowerPoint Presentation re tips for working with and ASL interpreter <http://www.georgebrown.ca/saffairs/deaf/working-with-Interpreters.pps>
- **Ministry of Community and Social Services: Review of Interpreter & Intervenor Services Executive Summary December 2004** http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A03D95D5-1C29-43F7-98F1-DEF90A89BE54/463/interpreter_intervenor_report_en.doc
- **Ontario Human Rights System - February 2009** Source: <http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/ontariosystem.htm>
- **Ontario Human Rights Commission: Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate** <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyDisAccom2>

Federal

- **Canadian Association of the Deaf** protects and promotes the rights, needs and concerns of Deaf people in Canada. <http://www.cad.ca>
- **Canadian Hearing Society (CHS)** offers programs, services and information that remove communication barriers. <http://www.chs.ca>
CHS Publications:
http://www.chs.ca/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,170/Itemid,267/lang,english/
 - Get Connected to Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People: A Guide for Service Providers and Businesses
 - Guide for Making Your Meetings Accessible
 - CHS Position on Accessibility and Accommodations
<http://www.chs.ca/en/documents-and-publications/chs-position-papers/index.php>

International

- **World Federation for the Deaf** <http://www.wfdeaf.org/about.html>
- **Web Video Call** <http://www.oovoo.com/How-To-ooVoo/Web-Video-Call.aspx>

Appendix 6: Deaf Culture Training within Halton Regional Police Training

September 18, 2009

Prepared by Sgt. Jeff Sandy and S/Sgt. Larry R. Masson

The Halton Regional Police recognize that there is a large deaf community in Halton and that community plays an integral part in the overall makeup of the Region of Halton. Recognizing the need to better serve the deaf community The Service has and continues to work with the Canadian Hearing Society to enhance training and understanding of deaf culture for our officers.

In 2004, Staff Sergeant Larry Masson initiated contact with The Canadian Hearing Society to develop a training package to be presented by the Hearing Society to all members of the Service through our Block Training program. A 90 minute session was created to deliver deaf culture training to officers by a deaf person from the CHS with an interpreter.

The “Deaf Culture Training” was delivered to all sworn members in the 2004/05 Block Training program utilizing a deaf facilitator from CHS. Topics included cultural issues; terminology; recognition of a deaf person; behaviour norms; environmental issues; communicating with a deaf person; working with an interpreter; accommodation; and dealing with problems.

In December 2007, approximately forty Diversity Officers received deaf culture training.

There are two members of the Service who are competent in sign language such that they can readily communicate with deaf persons

Currently the Halton Regional Police Service is planning to provide a training session concerning the deaf community to members of the Service in November 2009. The session will be geared for the designated Diversity Officers, but will be open to all members. The Service and the CHS are also in the early planning stages of delivering deaf culture training to all sworn members again in 2010.

Appendix 7: Circulation of this report

This report is being circulated to the following:

City of Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee

426 Brant Street, PO Box 5013, Burlington, Ontario L7R 3Z6

Phone: 905-335-7777 Toll Free: 1-877-213-3609

Judi Lytle, Accessibility Coordinator

Phone: 905 335-7600, ext 7865 Email: lytlej@burlington.ca

Town of Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee

The Corporation of the Town of Halton Hills, 1 Halton Hills Drive, Halton Hills, ON L7G 5G2

Phone: 905 873-2601 Toll Free: 1-877-712-2205 General Fax: 905-873-2347

Debbie Edmonds, Deputy Clerk

E-mail: debbiee@haltonhills.ca

Town of Milton Accessibility Advisory Committee

150 Mary Street, Milton, ON L9T 6Z5

Phone Town Hall: 905 878-7252 Toll Free: 1-800-418-5494

TTY: Town Hall - Main Reception 905 878-1657 Community Services Department 905 878-8902

Leisure Services 905 878-0122 Milton Public Library 905 875-1550

Darren Cooper, Coordinator, Accessibility & Special Needs, Community Services Department

E-mail: darren.cooper@milton.ca Website: www.milton.ca

Town of Oakville Accessibility Advisory Committee

Corporation of the Town of Oakville, P.O. Box 310, 1225 Trafalgar Road. Oakville, ON L6J 5A6

Phone: 905-845-6601 TTY: 905-338-4200 Website: www.oakville.ca

Carol Gall, Accessibility Program Coordinator

E-mail: cgall@oakville.ca

Halton Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, L6M 3L1

Tel: 905 825-6000 Toll Free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

Gabrielle Baldazzi, Senior Policy Advisor, Strategic Planning & Policy

Ext. 7485 E-mail: gabrielle.baldazzi@halton.ca Website: www.halton.ca

Halton Region Diversity Advisory Committee

1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, L6M 3L1

Phone: 905-825-6000 Toll Free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

Zerezghi Haile, Diversity Advisor Ext. 7972

E-mail: zerezghi.haile@halton.ca Website: www.halton.ca

Halton Region Office of the CAO

1151 Bronte Road, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, L6M 3L1

Phone: 905-825-6000 Toll Free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

Carleen Carroll, Director of Strategic Communications Ext. 6080

E-mail: carleen.carroll@halton.ca Website: www.halton.ca

Local Health Integration Network Mississauga – Halton

700 Dorval Dr, Ste 500, Oakville, ON L6K 3V3

Phone: 905-337-7131 Toll Free: 1-866-371-5446

Fax: 905-337-8330

Organizational email: mississaugahalton@lhins.on.ca

Website: www.mississaugahaltonlhins.on.ca

John Magill, Board Chair and Bill MacLeod, CEO

Halton Region Police Services

Halton Regional Police Service Headquarters, 1151 Bronte Rd, Oakville, ON L6M 3L1
Non-emergency numbers: Local: 905-878-5511 Calling from Toronto: 905-825-4777
Calling from Hamilton: 905-634-1831; Automated Attendant: 905-825-4747 TTY: 1-800-990-8199
Gary Crowell, Chief of Police
Organizational E-mail: info@hrps.on.ca Website: www.hrps.on.ca

Downtown Milton Business Improvement Area (BIA Milton)

251 Main St E, Unit 103, Milton, ON L9T 1P1
Phone: 905-876-2773 Website: www.downtownmilton.com
Organizational E-mail: info@downtownmilton.com
Jacquelyn Garrard, Executive Director, Milton B.I.A.
Anita Mangotich, Chairperson, Phone: 905-875-2999, Email: hhfj@bellnet.ca

Chamber of Commerce Milton

251 Main St E, Ste 104, Milton, ON L9T 1P1
Phone: 905-878-0581 Fax: 905-878-4972
Sandy Martin, Executive Director
Organizational E-mail: info@chamber.milton.on.ca Website: www.chamber.milton.on.ca

The Bob Rumball Association for the Deaf

7801 Campbellville Rd West, Milton, ON L9T 2X9
TEL: 905-878-4932 TTY: 905-875-4368 FAX: 905-878-4934
Karen Chambers, Executive Director Ext. 207
E-mail: kchambers@bobrumball.org Website: www.bobrumball.org

The Canadian Hearing Society Peel/Halton/Dufferin Regional Office

2227 South Millway, Suite 300, Mississauga, ON L5L 3R6
Phone (voice): 905-608-0271 TTY: 905-608-1691
Toll Free TTY: 1-877-679-5662 Toll Free: 1-866-603-7161
Fax: 905-608-8241 Website: www.chs.ca
Jim Hardman, Regional Program Manager E-mail: jhardman@chs.ca

PAH! Mental Health Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and Youth

Phone: 905 8782639 Cell: 416 7383564 Fax: 905-878-0177
Brenda Greenberg M.S.W. R.S.W, Manager Ext: 26
E-mail: Brendag@rockonline.ca Website: www.bobrumball.org/BRAD/pah.html

E. C. Drury Provincial School for the Deaf

255 Ontario Street South, Milton, Ontario L9T2M5
Phone: 905-878-2851 TTY: 905-878-7195 Fax: 905-878-9390
Jeanne Leonard, Principal, Elementary School, Fax: 905-878-9370, E-mail: jeanne.leonard@ontario.ca
Cindy Smith, Principal, Secondary Program, E-mail: cindy.smith@ontario.ca Ext 247 (v)
Antony McLetchie, Principal, Secondary Program, Email: antony.mcletchie@ontario.ca Ext. 260 contact through
Bell Relay 800 855 0511
Beth Davies, Director of Provincial Schools, Provincial Schools Branch, Ministry of Education
E-mail: beth.davies@ontario.ca
Cheryl Zinszer, Superintendent of Provincial Schools, Provincial Schools Branch, Ministry of Education
E-mail: cheryl.zinszer@ontario.ca

E. C. Drury Provincial School for the Deaf Parent Council

255 Ontario Street South, Milton, Ontario L9T2M5

Chris Kenopic at chriskenopic@cogeco.ca and Denis Bergeron at bergeron004@cogeco.ca

Halton Region Health and Social and Community Services Departments

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Phone: 905 825 6000 Toll Free: 1 866 442 5866 TTY 905-827-9833 Website: www.halton.ca

Dr. Bob Nosal, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health Ext: 7806 E-mail: bob.nosal@halton.ca

Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Social and Community Services Ext: 7094

E-mail: adelina.urbanski@halton.ca

Halton Catholic District School Board

PO Box 5308, C. G. Byrnes Catholic Education Centre, 802 Drury Lane, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y2

Board Office: 905-632-6300 From North Halton: 1-800-741-8382 Website: www.hcdsb.org

Michael W. Pautler, Director of Education, Phone: ext 115, E-mail: pautterm@hcdsb.org

Halton District School Board

J.W. Singleton Education Centre, 2050 Guelph Line, Burlington, ON L7R 3Z2

Phone: 905-335-3663 from Toronto 905-842-3014 from Halton north 905-878-8451

Website: www.hdsb.ca

Wayne Joudrie, Director of Education, Phone: ext 3296, E-mail: jourdriew@hdsb.ca

Bruce Jones, Chair of the Board, Phone: (C) 905-691-8321, E-mail: jonesbr@hdsb.ca

Donna Danielli, Vice Chair of the Board, Phone: (W) 905-854-6339, Fax: 905-854-6001, E-mail: daniellid@hdsb.ca

Centennial College

Centennial College, P.O. Box 631, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M1K 5E9

Phone: 416-289-5000 Toll Free: 1-800-268-4419

Organizational E-mail: success@centennialcollege.ca

Ann Buller, President E-mail: abuller@centennialcollege.ca

Halton Healthcare Services**Chief of Staff**

Halton Healthcare Services

Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital

327 Reynolds Street

Oakville ON L6J 3L7

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Attention: Jill Baxter, Admin Assist; Office of the Chief of Staff

Director, OTMH Hospital Program and Co-Chief of FM

Halton Healthcare Services

Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital

327 Reynolds Street

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(905) 338-4618

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Chief of Family Medicine

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Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital

Chief of Staff, JBMH Burlington

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