

POSITION STATEMENT

TITLE: COMMUNICATION ACCESS – SPORT & FITNESS CENTRES

ISSUE:

Most Sport and Fitness Centres provide inadequate communication access facilities for use by patrons and staff who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment. A very small number of facilities have instructors with basic Australian sign language (Auslan) skills.

All people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment have the same right to access facilities as do people with hearing. Therefore, if a sport and fitness centre provides a telephone, television sets in the machine and weights area, amplification system in the group fitness area, fire alarms, etc. for the benefit of patrons and staff, then those facilities must be accessible to all people regardless of their hearing. Failure to provide equitable access to such facilities means the person who is Deaf or has a hearing impairment is discriminated against. It is illegal to discriminate against people on the basis of their hearing/deafness disability. If there are legislative provisions to provide particular facilities, such as fire alarms, then those facilities must be accessible to all.

Unless captioned, an intercom system or telephone should not be used for patrons to gain access to any secured area.

It is possible to provide communication access through the provision of the right equipment. For example, it is possible to purchase teletext-enabled TV sets so that captions may be displayed. It is possible to purchase telephones with text display, volume control, ring flasher for incoming calls, amplifiers and hearing aid couplers. A range of affordable solutions exists.

There is no valid reason why building operators cannot provide adequate communication access for all users who need it.

POSITION:

That, regardless of whether or not there are particular legislative requirements:

1. All sport and fitness centres should provide communication access facilities where necessary to ensure that all Deaf or hearing impaired users will be alerted to information or danger and to any evacuation drill or system test within the premises at the same time as all other venue users. Emergency alarms should also include visual indicators such as a red strobe light in conjunction with horns and evacuation speakers / sirens. Visual warning indicators should be provided at least in isolated rooms such as steam rooms, sauna rooms, toilets, showers, and change areas.

2. All sport and fitness centres should provide communication access facilities where necessary to enable all Deaf and hearing impaired users gain access to information:

- Access to captioning on telephones. There should be at least a telephone with TTY facility at Reception to allow text communication with deaf callers unable to hear voice.
- Teletext-enabled television or video display sets must always have the subtitles/captions on.
- Functioning assistive listening systems (ALS), such as Induction loop (IL), Frequency Modulated (FM), or Infrared (IR) systems, to enable all participants who need ALS to clearly hear the information without reverberation or background noise.
- Voice telephones with:
 - (a) Built in or clip on amplifiers (minimum of 20dB gain compared to a standard telephone as defined by Telecommunications legislation);
 - (b) Telecoil couplers (minimum field strength of 100mA/m); and
 - (c) Flashing lights to alert the user to the fact that the voice telephone or intercom is responding.
- Text facility using Baudot 50 (such as TTYs) compatible with TTYs complying with EIA/TIA-825, and compatible with the National Relay Service. In addition, flashing lights shall be provided to alert the user to the fact that the text telephone is ringing.
- Provision of wall mirrors at front and back of group fitness rooms to enable the deaf person to see the instructor at all times.

3. All facility operators should implement the following:

- Availability of a fitness instructor with basic awareness of deafness issues -
 - Able to use basic signs to indicate upcoming changes in aerobic moves
 - Awareness of a Deaf or hearing impaired person's need to be at the front of the class for a clear view of the instructor
 - In aerobic moves that require the class to turn around, the instructor should move through the class so he/she is always at the front
- Ongoing maintenance and checking of all communication access equipment and procedures, including making sure that subtitles/captions on television sets are always on
- Promote (including signage) the existence of installed communication access facilities

- Use the International Symbol for Deafness to identify:
 - The existence of hearing (communication) access.
 - The type of system available.
 - The areas covered by the system.

Explanations

1. Some hearing-impaired people do not wear their hearing aids during exercise because perspiration causes discomfort in the ear canal and affects the electronics of the hearing aid. Therefore, visual information, such as basic signing, is needed.
2. People with telecoils in their hearing aids need telecoil couplers for telephone access. They are built in to some telephones. Many phones that are fitted with telecoils are of insufficient strength.
3. People without telecoils in their hearing aids (or without hearing aids at all) need built-in clip-on amplifiers for telephone access.
4. Adequate volume control for the majority of hearing impaired people is 20dB gain compared to a standard telephone as defined by Telecommunications legislation.
5. Telephones with 20dB gain usually have built-in telecoils of sufficient strength, and do not require clip-on amplifiers or clip-on telecoil couplers.
6. A significant number of hearing-impaired people wear hearing aids but cannot benefit from the hearing aid coupler. Therefore, captioning or text display must be provided.
7. Wherever flashing lights are used to alert people they must be visible from the area near the telephone/intercom facility.

COSTS OF POSITION

The cost of implementing this position statement is considered to be small.

RESEARCH BASIS

The availability of the range of communication access facilities referred to in the position statement is known.

APPROVED: Board 2005.

REVIEWED: Not yet reviewed.

DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: No review yet scheduled.