



Aphasia Centre of Ottawa  
**STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2013**  
*May 2010*



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## **Letter from the President & Chair of Aphasia Centre of Ottawa**

*Aphasia is a complex communication disorder which is not well known or understood by the general public. Patients with aphasia and their families may receive excellent care while in hospital and rehabilitation programs, yet can be catapulted into a seemingly foreign universe when they are discharged as fit to return home. It is very hard to imagine the impact of not being able to communicate with those who are committed to caring for you. It is impossible to imagine the frustration of a caregiver who cannot understand what to do to help. And, above all, it is devastating for everyone when the realization slowly dawns that the stroke survivor may have aphasia to some degree for the rest of their lives.*

*This reality strikes hardest when the person or their family recognize that, not only do they not know where and how to access supportive services, but that there are no publicly funded communication therapy and counselling support programs in the Ottawa region to assist them in their transition or to help them as new problems arise.*

*Individuals and families who have been fortunate enough to participate in the programs at the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa tell us that this support is an invaluable lifeline. Professional staff, in the areas of speech-language pathology and social work, as well as trained, supervised volunteers, reach into the community every day to provide ongoing communication and family therapy, wellness education, and crisis intervention for families in need.*

*We are confident that the initiatives undertaken by the Board of Directors over the last year, which include the implementation of a new governance structure and the generation of the strategic directions articulated within this plan, will provide the foundation for the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa to continue delivering professional, accountable, and cost-effective health care and social services to people with aphasia in the community and their families.*

*Bill Megill  
Chair, Aphasia Centre of Ottawa*

*Ken Peake  
President, Aphasia Centre of Ottawa*



# What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder caused by injury to the brain that affects a person's ability to process information involving the use of words. Often described as people who “know more than they can say” (Kagan) alluding to their reduced ability to express themselves using speech, individuals with aphasia also may have some difficulty with reading and writing. Overall severity of communicative impairment can vary greatly. Regardless of the severity of aphasia, the impact of this disability can be devastating leading to social isolation, depression and family breakdown.

For some families, living with aphasia is described as a life sentence rather than a life saved. The tragedy of aphasia is that it masks a person's intelligence and ability to communicate feelings, thoughts and emotions. Although aphasia does not directly affect an individual's thinking and reasoning skills, the loss of fluent speech and the inability to easily engage in conversation often fosters the misperception of mental and verbal incompetence. People are usually intelligent, competent individuals who still have the ability to think and make decisions. Fortunately, through the skilled use of communication strategies developed by speech-language pathologists this competence can be revealed and even the most distressed families can be helped to cope successfully.



speaking



reading



writing

# What is the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa?




The Aphasia Centre of Ottawa is part of a network of independent Centres that exist throughout the province. These Centres are essential to ensuring that families living with aphasia have equal provision of quality health care and social services. Aphasia Centres ensure that when individuals who have aphasia leave hospital the discharge plan includes an appropriate referral for communication and emotional support. This support helps them remain living in the community for as long as possible.


Aphasia Centres offer special programs, services, and crisis intervention to people with aphasia and their family members after discharge to the community. At the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa, these services blend the experience, evidence-based practices, and ethical and regulated standards of speech-language pathology and social work. Volunteers from the community are an essential part of our service delivery and they receive specialized training in order to assist in our programs. Cost effective group therapy and family interventions form the backbone of the Centre's prevention and treatment approaches.




## **Why are Aphasia Centres essential to quality health care and social services?**

 They offer an environment which is specially adapted to making communication possible. In the same way that experts in universal design can make environments physically accessible, special techniques and adaptations must be used to reduce communication barriers for people with aphasia.


### **Programs and services keep people with aphasia in their homes for as long as possible.**

 Aphasia Centre of Ottawa programs help family cope by decreasing social isolation, building self esteem and promoting inclusion in community activities. We do this through a variety of conversation therapy programs, family counselling, physical exercise and activity programs. What distinguishes all of these programs is the special expertise in aphasia-adapted support in order to maximize full participation by the person with aphasia.

### **Aphasia Centres bridge communication gaps in existing health care and social services.**

 For example, many of clients told us that they did not understand the purpose of their medication. It had never been explained to them in an aphasia-adapted way. So we collaborated with a community pharmacist and, using aphasia-adapted materials and techniques, discussed with our clients common medications that stroke survivors take. For many of our clients, it was the first time that they truly understood the purpose of their medication. Another example involves an area of special concern, that of elder abuse. An individual who cannot speak is extremely vulnerable to neglect and other types of abuse. At the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa, we are leaders in awareness, prevention and treatment of aphasia-related abuse.

### **They provide an important sense of security to families.**

 Families benefit from knowing that they have a safety net - a communicatively accessible place that they can turn to for help at any time after discharge home. Often this need for support is greatest during the early stages of adjustment to the real life challenges of coping at home. Unfortunately, living with aphasia does not always get easier over time and years down the road crises may arise. Intervention at this stage prevents family breakdown and unnecessary hospitalization or placement outside the home. Many other families benefit from regular attendance at Aphasia Centre programs. Regular participation provides opportunities to continue improving communication abilities and maintaining a sense of well-being.



## **VISION**

The Aphasias Centre of Ottawa (ACO) is a respected, cost effective, accountable health and social services delivery agent. Using a broad range of community-based and family-focused interventions, the ACO enhances the capability of people with aphasia and their families to continue living healthy lives and remain in their homes. Professional staff and trained volunteers provide communication therapy, counselling, ongoing support, and advocacy.

## **MISSION**

The Aphasias Centre of Ottawa is dedicated to facilitating the inclusion of people with aphasia in family and community life by bridging the communication gap.



## CORE VALUES

- We believe that after returning to the community, people with aphasia and their families deserve the opportunity to access aphasia-adapted professional services as needed.
- We believe that in order for people with aphasia to make known their need for help there must be opportunities to develop trusting relationships with health care and social service providers through frequent and regular face to face contact.
- We believe that by strengthening close relationships we can enhance individual and family resilience following the trauma of loss of communication.
- Our priority is to help those who need help most, recognizing that all who are affected by aphasia are highly vulnerable and at increased risk for social isolation, depression and aphasia-related abuse.
- We are community-based and family-focused, building long-term, meaningful relationships.
- We are committed to inclusive and caring delivery of services based on inter-professional collaboration and learning.
- We invest in excellence and continuous improvement in all aspects of the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa's endeavours.
- We believe that to meet the needs of families living with aphasia a co-therapy model of intervention combining the expertise of speech-language therapists and social workers is essential.



## SCOPE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN



The strategic directions that follow will establish the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa as a well-governed, necessary, and valuable health care and social service provider whose services quantifiably support the long-term strategic directions of the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, Community Care Access Centres, United Way Centraide Ottawa, and related clinical, rehabilitation care, and social services providers.

This strategic plan focuses on **five strategic directions** relating to:

*Strategic Direction #1*  
**GOVERNANCE**

*Strategic Direction #2*  
**IMPROVED VISIBILITY**

*Strategic Direction #3*  
**ADVOCACY AND ACCESSIBILITY**

*Strategic Direction #4*  
**RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

*Strategic Direction #5*  
**FUNDING**



## **Strategic Direction #1: Governance**

The Aphasia Centre of Ottawa (ACO) employs ethical, effective, and accountable governance and management practices that fulfill the expectations of individuals, families, and funding partners.

### Initiatives:

- To employ sound governance practices that bear the scrutiny of clients, funders, and stakeholders such that the ACO becomes an annually funded and credible health care services delivery resource within communities.
- To exercise responsible stewardship of ACO resources such that ACO is seen as the preferred cost-effective community alternative for community-based, aphasia-related therapies and programs following discharge from a hospital-related program.
- To increase member and stakeholder awareness of ACO's commitment to governance and management excellence through enhanced results-based reporting.

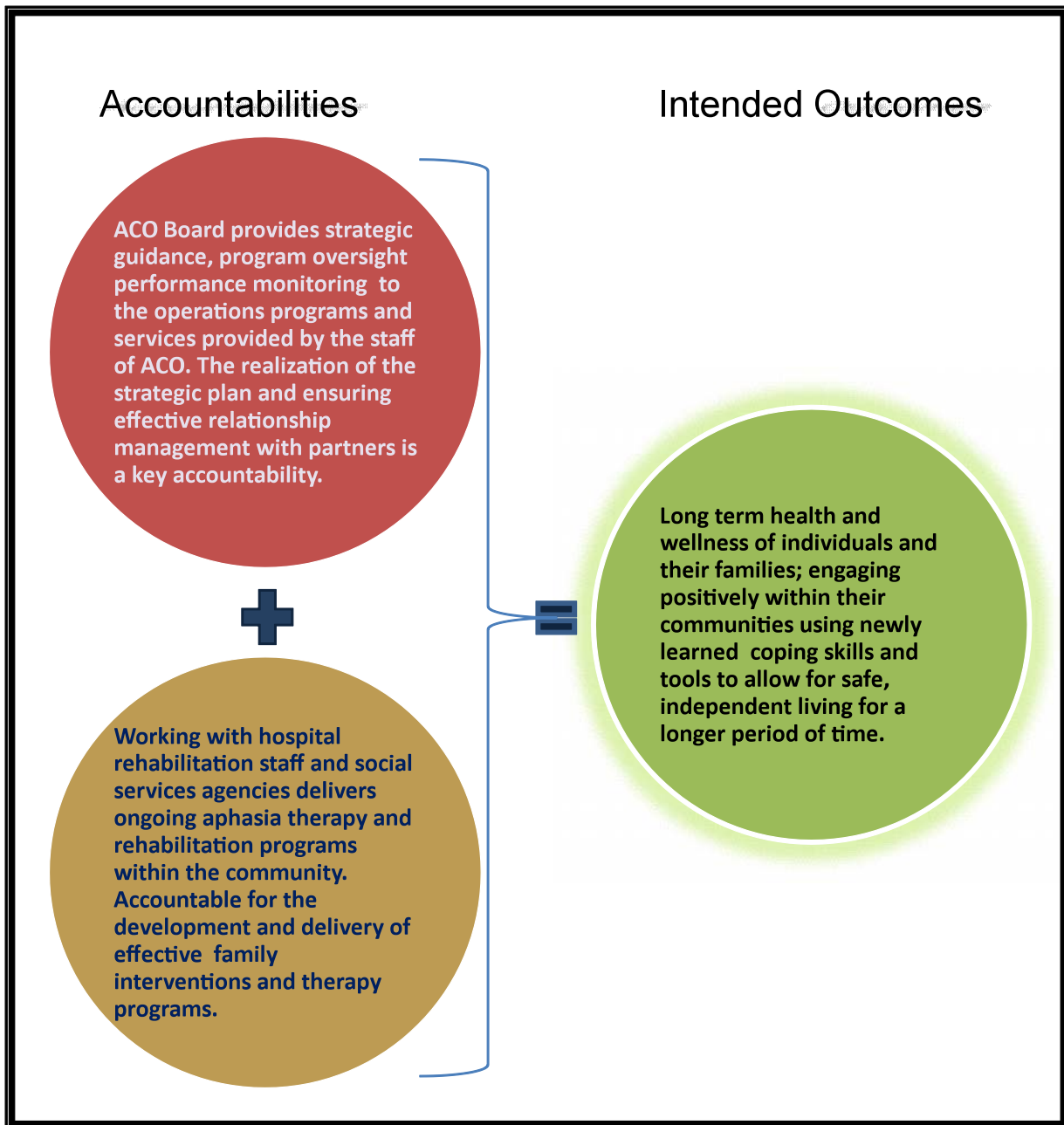
### Outcomes:

- Annual audit results
- Access to information regarding administrative costs per client and impact of therapy outcomes on overall rehabilitation budgets
- Feedback from clients and selected stakeholders
- Client, family, and stakeholder satisfaction

Lead: Board



# Achieving Planned Outcomes Through Accountability



## **Strategic Direction #2: Improved Visibility**

The ACO will enhance outreach initiatives to the public, other social service and health care providers and funding stakeholders to increase awareness of aphasia-related issues.

ACO will be widely recognized as a specialized and unique professional resource, providing information and support services for families living with aphasia in the community.

### Initiatives:

- Increase numbers of in-services and presentations outlining ACO services and resources to community groups and other professionals
- Increase direct contact with and feedback to health care and social service providers along the continuum of care related to the care and progress of individual clients.
- Delivery of a unified message, which clearly articulates ACO's identity; the scope and cost of services; anticipated treatment outcomes; and, its role within the health care and social services networks. (See 'Welcome to the Aphasia Centre of Ottawa' handbook)
- Active distribution of ACO brochures, formatted to be communicatively accessible and continued development of aphasia-friendly website.

### Outcomes:

#### Improved awareness of ACO evidenced by:

- Increased numbers of referrals from families; family physicians; specialized, ambulatory clinics; and community-based health and social service agencies.
- Increased numbers of referrals of patients with aphasia upon discharge from acute care.
- More timely referrals and concerted, seamless transition to ACO services.

#### Partnership Networks Targeted

- Community Health and Resource Centres
- Family Health Teams
- Emergency services & Stroke Prevention Centre
- Community-based family service agencies

Lead: Board and Executive Director



### **Strategic Direction #3: Advocacy and Accessibility**

The Aphasia Centre of Ottawa will continue to advocate for those persons affected by aphasia who cannot advocate for themselves, to champion communicative access as a basic human right and to promote dignity and respect for people living with aphasia.

ACO will continue to be pioneers in the area of communicative access related to family crisis intervention and other critical areas such as legal, financial and informed health choices.

#### Initiatives:

- Expansion of services for Francophone clients.
- Expansion of closer to home services by establishing and/or supporting programs in communities in new geographical locations.
- Increased participation in formal groups with a mandate to improve accessibility for people with aphasia and other communicative disorders.
- Creation and distribution of bilingual, aphasia-adapted resource materials for use by all interested parties.
- Creation and distribution of guidelines/decision tree for use by other professionals in identification and intervention of aphasia-related abuse.

#### Outcomes:

- Equitable, community-based francophone health and social services.
- Increased participation of Francophone clients to match general demographic representation of 10-15%.
- Increased system-wide capacity for prevention and treatment of aphasia-related abuse

#### Partnership Networks Targeted:

- The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Advisory Group
- City of Ottawa Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Consortium national de formation en santé; volet Université d'Ottawa
- Champlain Community Care Access Centres
- The Ontario Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse
- The Council on Aging of Ottawa Elder Abuse Advisory Group
- Regional Geriatric Program of Eastern Ontario
- Community and Hospital based social workers

Lead: Executive Director



## **Strategic Direction #4: Research and Education**

The Aphasia Centre of Ottawa will continue to contribute to and learn from research and clinical education related to aphasia and its impact on the affected individual and their families.

ACO programs will continue to be evidence-based, with program evaluation supported by both qualitative and quantitative outcome measures.

### Initiatives:

- Expand student clinical supervision and lecturing partnerships with university and community college programs.
- Maintain on-going recruitment of undergraduates seeking volunteer experience related to health care and social service professional career programs.
- Program evaluation, pilot projects and collaborative aphasia-related research.
- Development of standards for aphasia-adapted research protocols, informed consent and privacy statements.
- Promoting and facilitating participation of people with aphasia in educational/research projects which are communicatively-accessible.

### Outcomes:

- Enhanced capacity to maintain bilingual, cost-effective service delivery at ACO through use of supervised student intern clinicians and volunteers.
- Increased system-wide capacity for delivery of support and professional services for people with aphasia.
- Increased reliability of research initiatives through inclusion of people with communicative disability.

### Partnership Networks Targeted:

- Masters' level social work and speech-language pathology programs at University of Ottawa and Carleton University.
- Collaboration with the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute
- Communication Disorders Assistant and Social Services Workers' programs at community colleges.
- Collaborative researchers at hospital and academic facilities
- Community-based Research Network Organization
- Ontario Aphasia Centres Interest Group
- Consortium national de formation en sante; volet Universite d'Ottawa

Lead: Executive Director



## **Strategic Direction #5: Sustainable Funding of Essential Services**

To date, Aphasia Centre of Ottawa (ACO) has been financially supported through diverse, largely unstable income streams, including individual and corporate donations, one-time grants, professional fees for education and outreach and sliding-scale fees for core group communication therapy programs. Contributions from publicly funded agencies have typically been directed to specific, finite projects and not for on-going programs.

**Key to achieving sustainability is securing committed, on-going public funding to offset the cost of providing people who have been affected by aphasia equitable access to essential, but ethically non-billable, health and social services.**

For persons without aphasia, these are services which, for the most part, are easily accessible through diverse, publicly funded community-based health care, social service and resource agencies. For persons who do have aphasia, there are no equivalent services, other than at ACO. These service inequities comprise:

- Crisis intervention for aphasia-related abuse, depression and family breakdown
- Communication training and counseling to support reconnection of persons with aphasia and their family caregivers
- Communicative support to access medical care, transportation, alternate and/or subsidized housing, etc

These services are typically finite and, once a situation has been resolved, do not require intensive, on-going intervention. For persons who have accessed hospital-based rehabilitation services, this kind of support from ACO is most often required following discharge, during the initial transition to community living. Need, however, is not predictable. Particularly for those who have never received rehabilitation and for persons who have been out of the health care system for some time, critical support may be required at any time post-onset involving significant life changes.

**Over 75% of ACO clients pay for services they have chosen as being most important to their on-going recovery with chronic aphasia. The ACO will become increasingly self-sustaining through continued diversification of income sources; incremental increases in fees for service; and, continuous program development to better meet identified needs, while maintaining cost containment. Income will be derived from:**



- Sliding-scale fees for core programs, with cost-recovery achieved through client fees and donations. Core activities, established as being of most benefit to the majority of clients and offered on an on-going or frequent basis include:
  - Supported Conversation Groups, in English and French
  - Enhanced Professional Intervention Groups
  - Communication Therapy and Counselling Groups for Individual/Couples/Family
  - Communicative Support for Fitness Program, Arts and Wellness Program and other leisure activities developed and/or sponsored by ACO
  - Workshops for clients
- Broader client base through expansion of ACO community-based services and programs to communities whose population numbers warrant local service provision.
- Project funding for emergent needs
- Professional fees and honoraria for education, in-services and outreach activities

#### Outcomes

- Sustained funding will enable the ACO to focus on relevant community-based delivery of communication and family therapy services for persons within the identified rehabilitation funding envelope.
- Formal and sustained funding will result in better triage, consistent reporting, increased system-wide ability to provide communicative access, and enhanced accountability and services equitable with other LHINs.
- Contributing to the effective delivery of the continuum of care within the community by providing the “right services, to the right people, by the right professionals” and by providing consistent outcome measure informed by evidence-based approaches and therapies.

#### Partnership Networks Targeted:

- Champlain LHIN
- United Way Ottawa Centraide

Lead: Board and Executive Director



## Aphasia Centre of Ottawa Staff



Gillian



Kathy



Joanne



Sibly

## Officers of the Board 2010

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# APHASIA CENTRE OF OTTAWA

HELPING GET THE WORD OUT SINCE 1990

