



DISABLED PERSONS COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION:

SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL  
DISABILITIES

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY...

# **An IDEAS Survey Report**

## **Access to Information: Services for People with Physical Disabilities**

**2007**

**For additional copies call us at 613-724-5886  
or visit our website [www.dpcr.ca](http://www.dpcr.ca)**

---

### **Disabled Persons Community Resources**

**1150 Morrison Drive, Suite 110  
Ottawa, Ontario K2H 8S9**

**Telephone: 613-724-5886  
Fax: 613-724-5889  
[www.dpcr.ca](http://www.dpcr.ca)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	
<b>Key Findings.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Respondent Profile.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Survey Responses.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix I: Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Appendix II: DPCR Research and Development Committee     Members.....</b>	<b>25</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Disabled Persons Community Resources wishes to acknowledge all the individuals who completed our Information on Services for People with Physical Disabilities Survey. We thank each and every one for their time and willingness to share their experiences with us. We'd also like to thank our volunteers on the Research and Development Committee as well as the members of the People with disabilities Community Coalition for their insight. This process was truly enriched by their participation.

DPCR is grateful to the United Way / Centraide Ottawa for the funding that made this project possible.



## INTRODUCTION

An established community leader in the push to create an inclusive City of Ottawa, Disabled Persons Community Resources (DPCR) recognizes the need for tools that help measure progress towards that goal. This report is the second in what will be a series of similar reports in an ongoing information gathering process designed precisely for that purpose. Together with our community partners, including the United Way / Centraide Ottawa which provided the funding for this report, we aim to determine how well we are doing as a community as we work to eliminate access barriers and develop City services that enable citizens with physical disabilities to fully participate in community life.

“Informed Decisions & Effective Action Strategies” (IDEAS) is the name we’ve given to this process. It will result in the publication of regular reports on specifically identified themes. Readily available information about services and programs is the keystone in the foundation of community supports for people with disabilities and consequently access to information was chosen as an issue for further investigation.

This report is a concise summary of data gathered during the months of February to April 2007. An online survey posted in those months asked questions intended to help us better understand how individuals seek information on services for people with physical disabilities, what sources they use and how difficult or easy is it to find the appropriate information.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### KEY FINDINGS

Survey respondents indicated an overwhelming preference for using the internet to find information and 92 % of respondents stated that they have access to the internet from their own homes. Not surprisingly 78% of respondents said they are familiar with using the technology. These results are very much in keeping with what is generally seen in the population at large which is that most of us now use the internet at least as a starting point for finding information.

It is reasonable and confirmed by the results that professionals such as social workers, occupational therapists, and home care workers are a primary source of information about services. These individuals are on the front lines of service delivery and are the face of the community support system. Next to professionals in the field, DPCR was picked by 60% of respondents as a known source of information and used by 50% followed by the Community Health and Resource Centres. Other agencies such as the Ottawa Independent Living Resource Centre, the MS Society and the Canadian Paraplegic Association were also named by respondents as known sources of information.

Ultimately respondents are looking for a range of information with no specific category holding a clear edge. Information on accessibility specifications, resources and funding sources along with information about equipment and supplies were chosen slightly higher than other categories.

Survey respondents indicated a relatively successful experience finding information with 62% stating that they were either always or most times able to get the information they seek. By contrast only 2% indicated that they are never able to find information.

Responses to the open ended question asking for suggestions to improving access to information about services provide some interesting insight. It would appear that there is a need to advertise resources that are available as many are not well known. Individuals also commented that they were not sure where to start looking for information and from their perspective, agencies and organizations do not seem to be coordinated or working together.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**In order to improve access to information about services for people with physical disabilities it is recommended that:**

1. Organizations work together to build a coordinated and accessible virtual information network;
2. A single entry point for online information on services for people with disabilities be created;
3. Information resources be advertised to the general public via mainstream media as well as community newspapers and agency newsletters;
4. A distinct information source or separate areas on individual websites be created for professionals that incorporate the capacity for online exchanges thereby enabling information and practical experience to be shared;
5. User-friendly databases containing a full range of information be developed and located on linked websites;
6. Given not everyone has access or the ability to use the internet, organizations maintain their capacity to provide information by telephone.

## METHODOLOGY

DPCR's Research & Development Committee serves as the steering committee for the IDEAS process. Committee members are volunteers and include representatives from partner agencies as well as individuals with personal experience with or knowledge of disability issues.

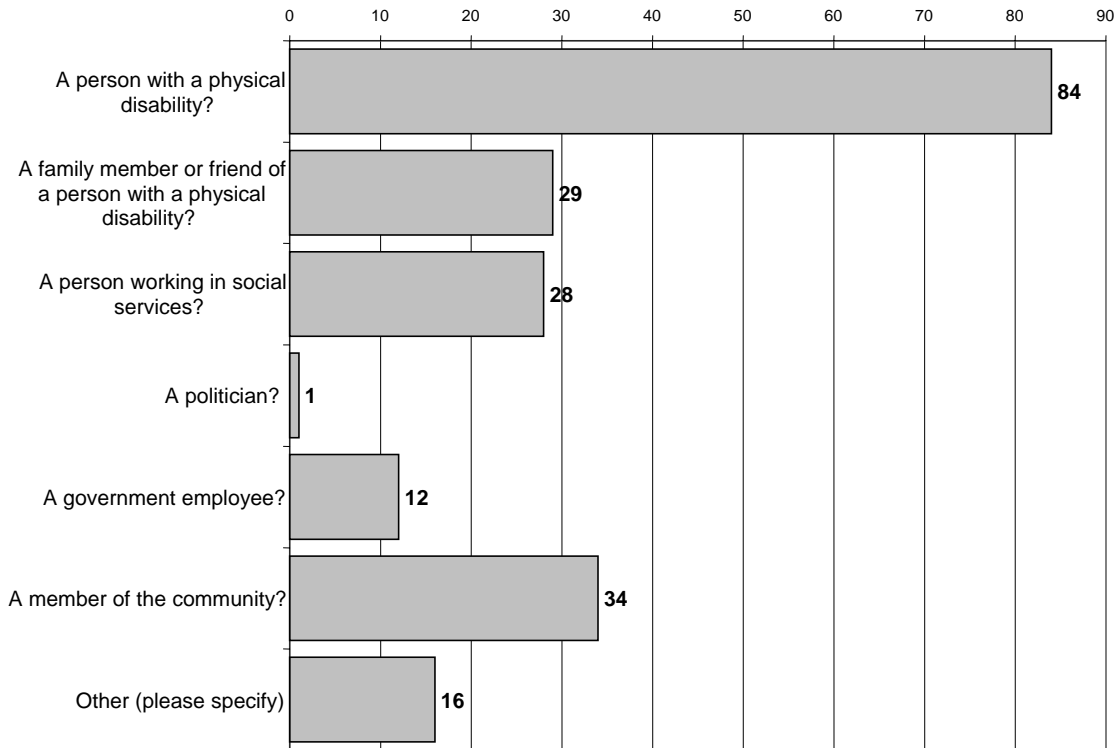
After consideration of the most effective, low cost means to connect with a broad cross section of the community, the decision was taken to post an online survey. It was decided to use [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) , a simple to use internet based survey design and posting tool.

People with physical disabilities were not specifically targeted as the audience for the survey. A distribution list including the People with disABILITIES Coalition, DPCR members and clients, professional contacts, government staff members and local politicians was compiled and these individuals were sent a notification of the survey by e-mail. Of the 628 e-mails, 133 were returned undeliverable leaving a total of 495 individuals who received the notification. The survey was posted on both DPCR and the United Way Ottawa / Centraide websites. The final result was that 127 individuals completed the survey.

Cognizant of the access challenges inherent with a survey whether posted online or provided in print, the Steering Committee also ensured that individuals wanting to participate were provided other options for completing the survey. Potential respondents were informed that they could call DPCR and either be interviewed over the phone or arrange to have someone assist them with filling out the survey.

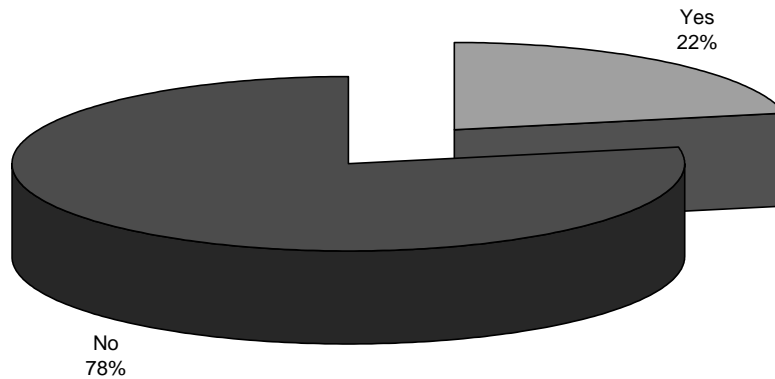
RESPONDENT PROFILE

Figure 1 – Are you (select all that apply)

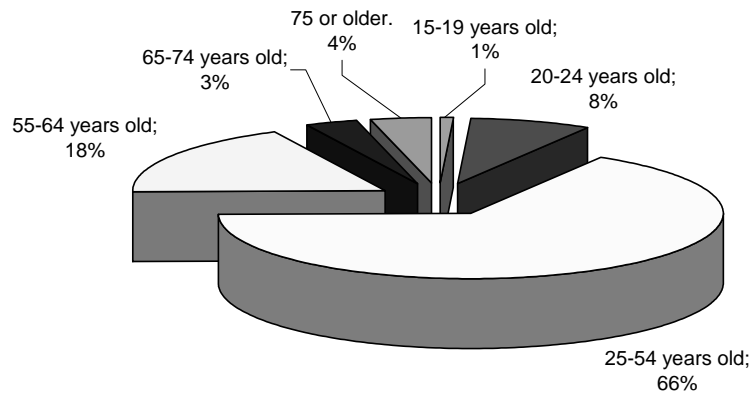


Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated that they have a disability. Respondents also included: community members (27%), family members or friends of a person with a disability (22%), people working in social services (22%), government employees (9%) and a politician (.8%).

Figure 2 - Do you have difficulties with speech or hearing?

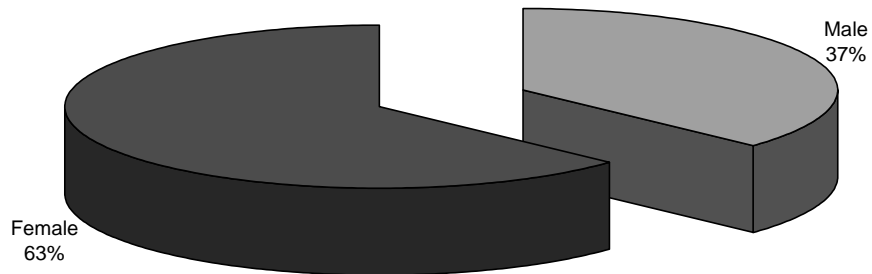


**Figure 3 – What is your age?**



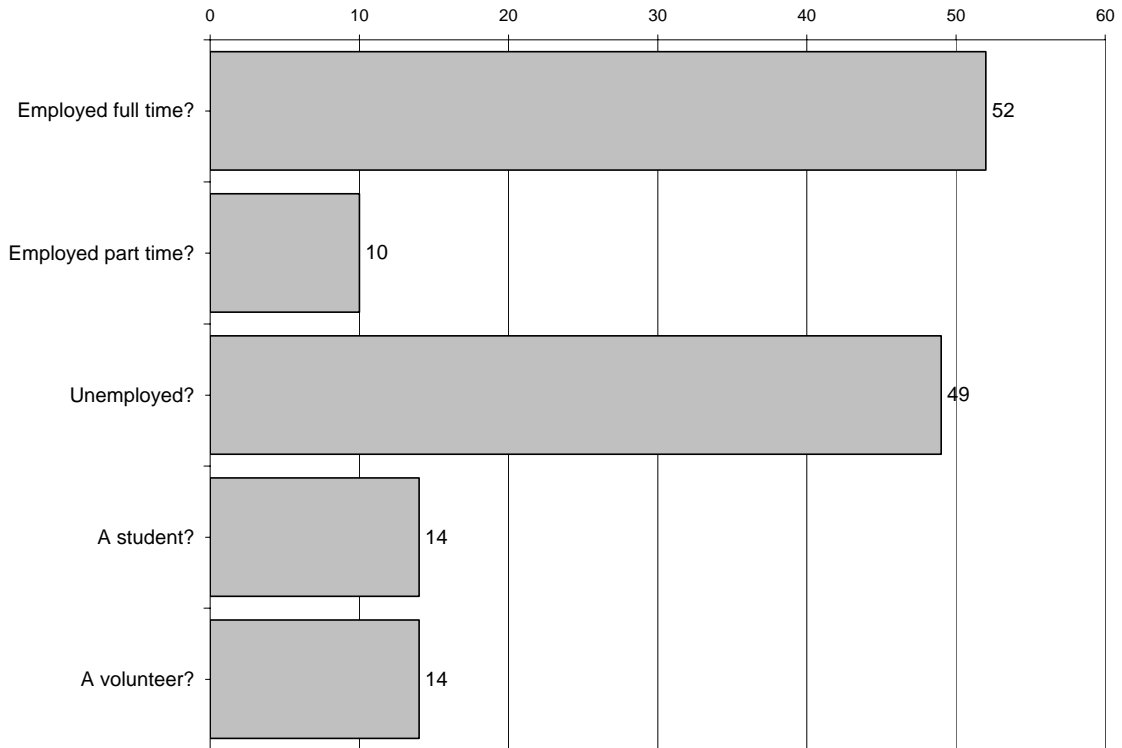
The majority of respondents (66%) were between the ages of 25 and 64 years of age. Seventy-five percent or 3 out of every 4 respondents were between the ages of 15 and 64.

**Figure 4 – Are you male or female?**



Sixty-three % or slightly less than two-thirds of survey respondents were women.

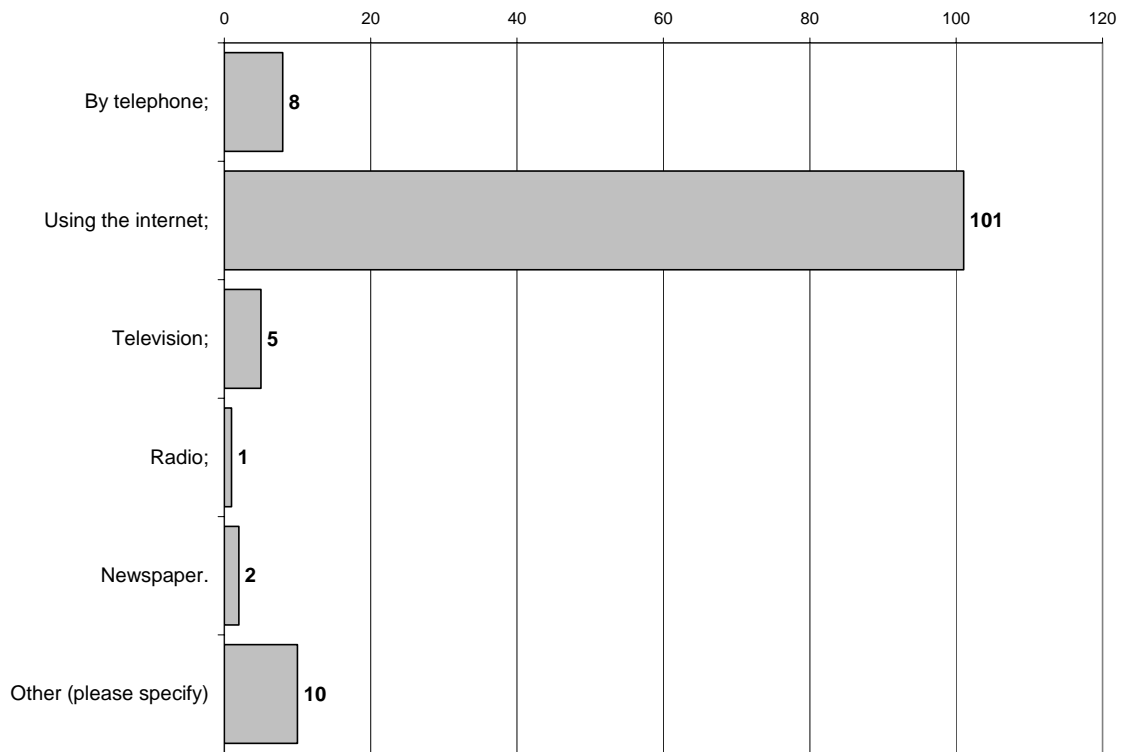
**Figure 5 – Are you? (select all that apply)**



Forty-nine percent of survey respondents indicated they were employed either full or part time while 39% indicated they were unemployed.

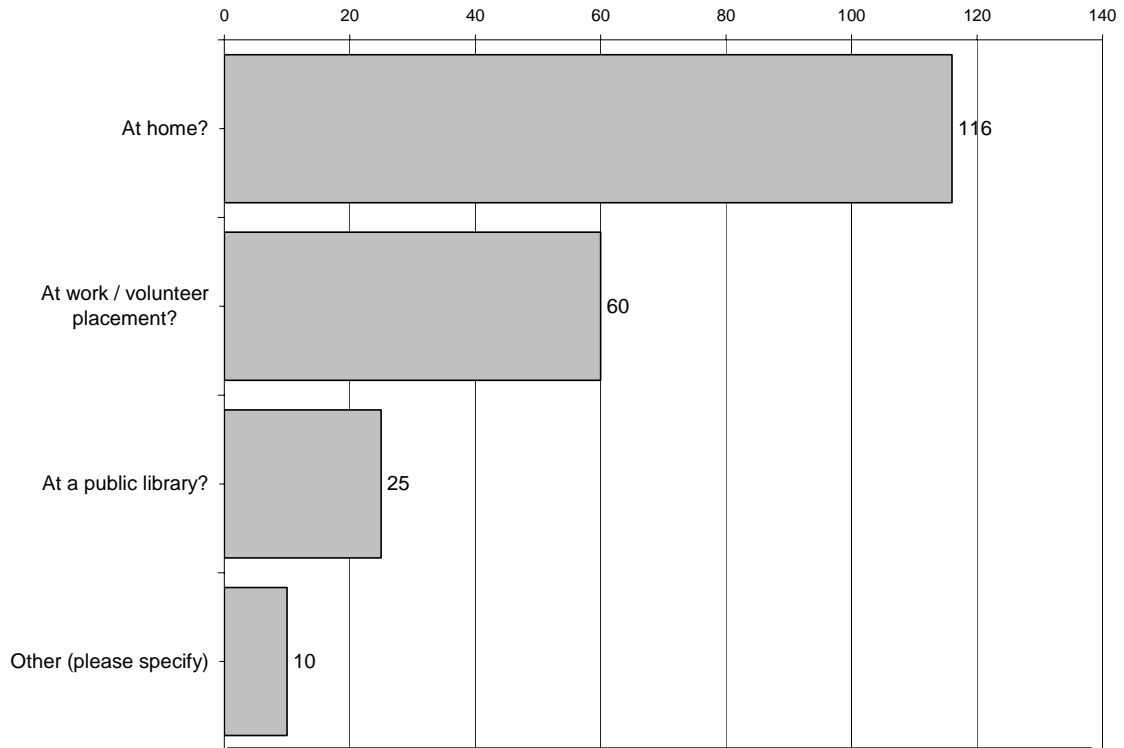
## SURVEY RESPONSES

Figure 6 – How do you prefer to get information?



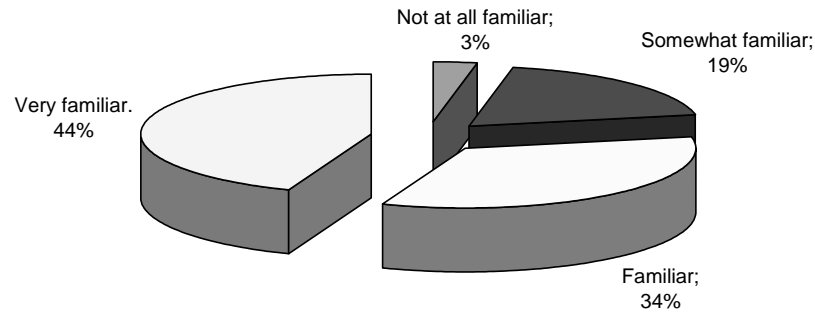
Respondents chose “Using the Internet” as their preferred method for getting information by a wide margin over all other options. In fact 101 of the 127 respondents or 80% said they prefer to use the internet. The second most prevalent response was “Other” chosen by 10 respondents. Looking at what people identified as other options, these include such things as e-mail, online newsletters, List Serves and regular mail. For the most part these are web based choices which further strengthens the internet as the preferred method for getting information.

**Figure 7 – Do you have access to the internet?**



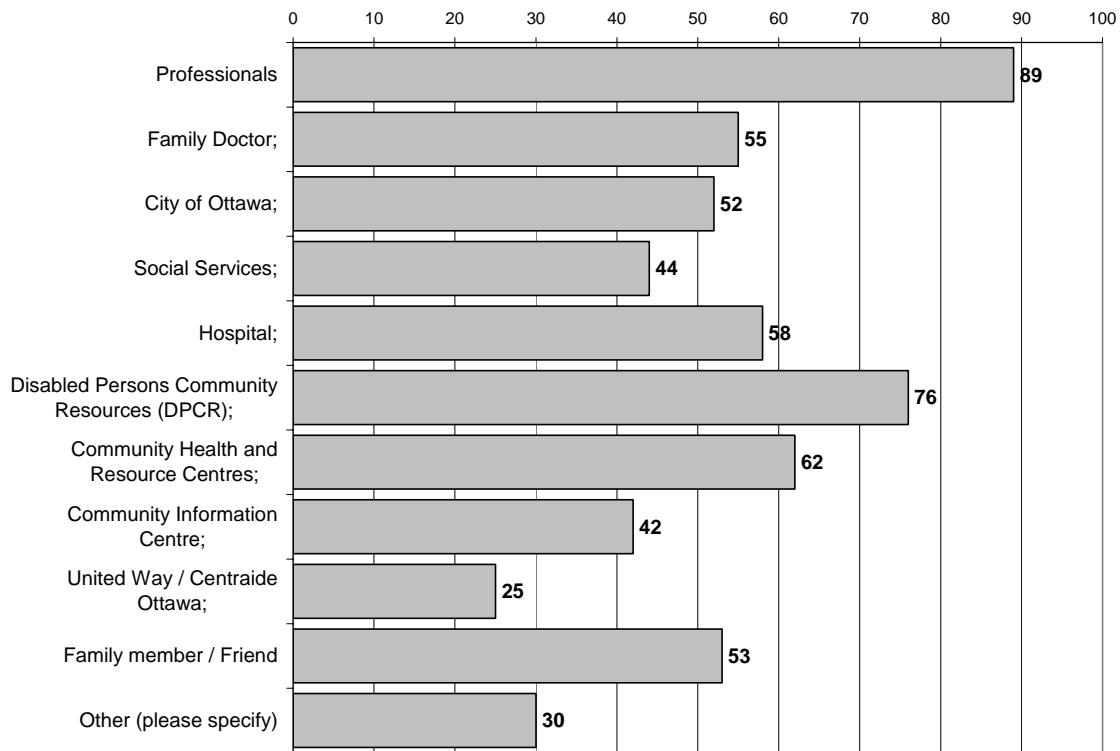
The answers to the question of where respondents have access to the internet indicate that 116 or approximately 92% are able to access the internet from home and 60 individuals or 47% are able to access the internet either at their place of work or where they volunteer. Clearly the internet is readily accessible for the majority of respondents.

**Figure 8 - How familiar are you with using the internet to find specific information that you require?**



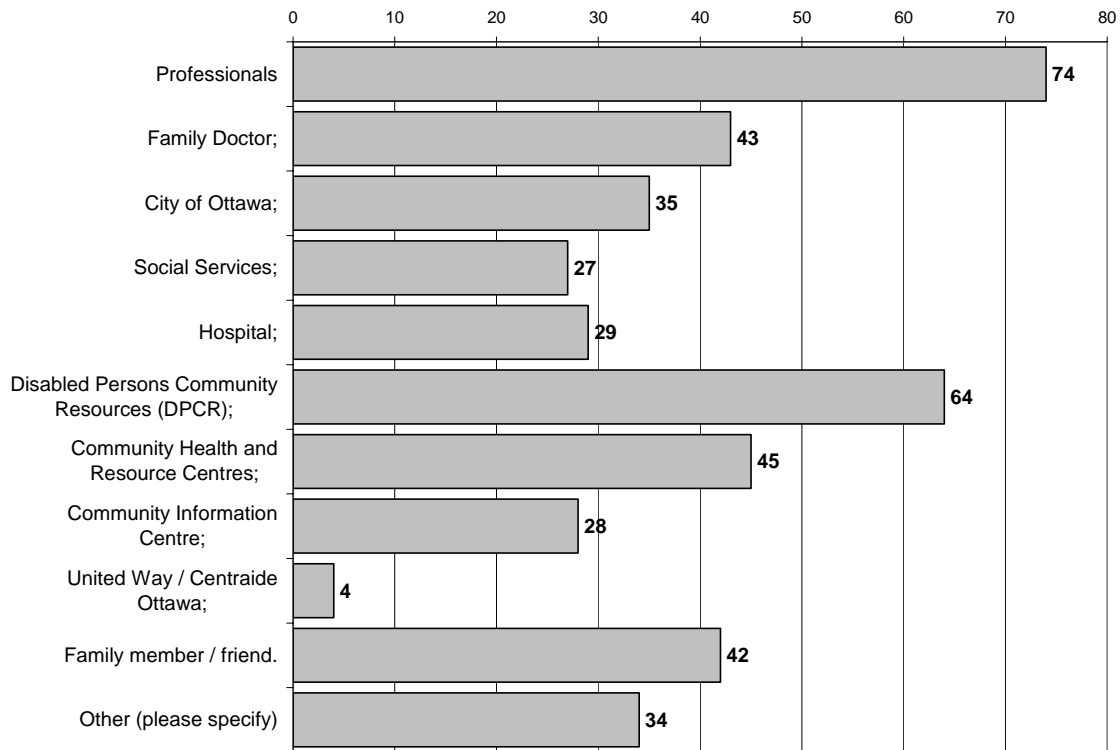
Given the overwhelming preference expressed by survey respondents for using the internet to get information as well as the numbers who have access at home, it is not surprising to find 78% of respondents indicate they are either very familiar or familiar with using the internet. Only 3% told us they are not at all familiar.

**Figure 9 – What sources of information about services or programs for people with physical disabilities do you know?**



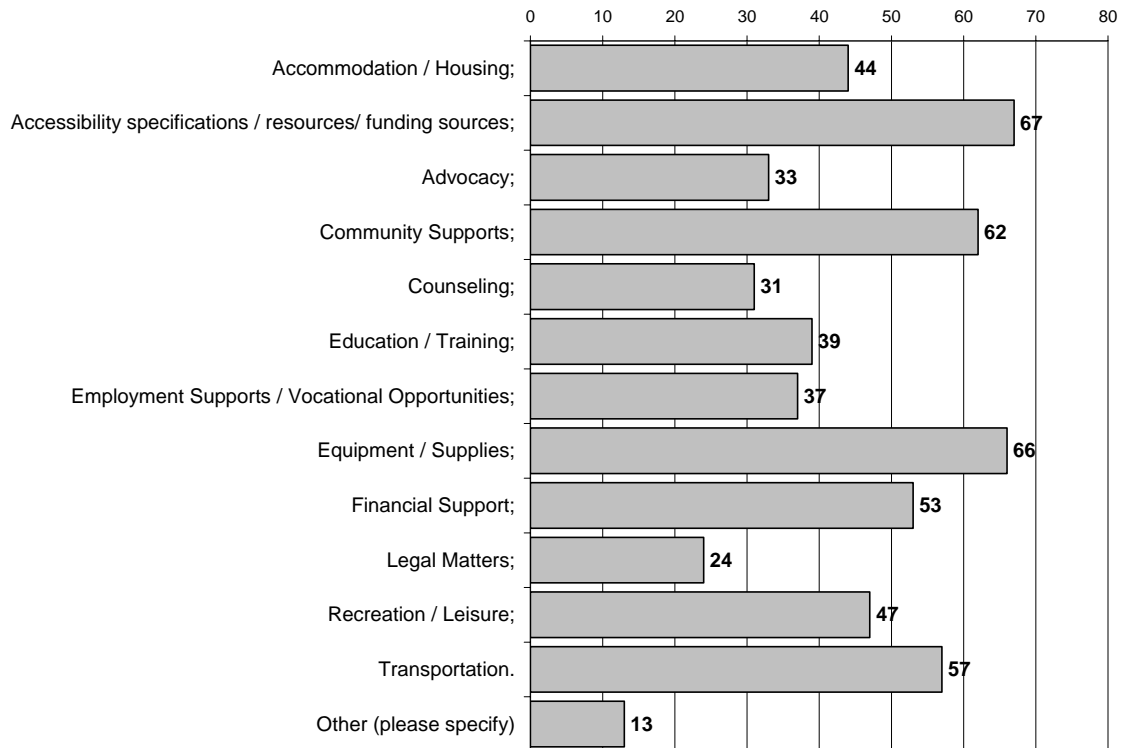
This question asks respondents to identify sources of information they are aware of as opposed to which they tend use which is asked next. It is important to note that respondents could choose more than one response. The results indicate that 71% of survey respondent's think of professionals such as social workers, occupational therapists or home care staff as potential sources of information. DPCR is thought of as a source of information by 60% of respondents followed by Community Health and Resources Centres at 49%. A scan of the sources suggested by respondents who chose the other category identifies several other specific organizations such as the Ottawa Independent Living Resource Centre, the MS Society, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Active Living Alliance and the National Capital Sports Council of the Disabled.

**Figure 10 – Where do you go for information about services or programs for people with physical disabilities?**

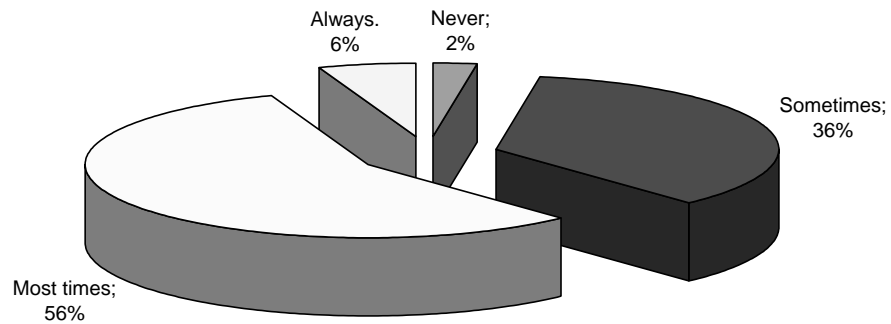


As one might expect, responses to the question about where respondent's go for information closely mirror the responses provided for the previous question about known sources. Once again keep in mind that respondents could choose more than one answer. Fifty-nine percent of survey respondent's said they go to professionals for information about services and DPCR was chosen by 50%. Community Health and Resource Centres were chosen by 35%. Other sources identified included the same specific organizations provided in the responses to the previous question.

**Figure 11 - What information are you most commonly looking for?**



There is no specific type of information that stands out appreciably from the rest as far as being the most sought after by survey respondents. Information about accessibility specifications, resources and funding sources and information about equipment and supplies were both chosen by 52% of survey respondents. Information about community supports, transportation and financial support were close behind falling in the 42 to 48% range.

**Figure 12 - Are you able to get the information you need?**

When asked whether they were able to get the information they need, survey respondents were for the most part positive in their response. Sixty-two percent indicated that they were either always or most times able to get the information they were seeking. Only 2% said that they are never able to get the information and 36% said they sometimes are able to get the information.

**Table 1 - Do you have any suggestions for improving access to information on services for people with physical disabilities?\***

Accessible web site one stop shopping available downloads in multiple formats trained information officers at call centers city, OCTranspo, Libraries, community resource centers etc more information about disability supports in the community.

Advertise advertise advertise ... Most people seeking information are new to the Handicapped scene and as such have no idea of the vast resources that are available. DPCR Handbook is a great start but first one has to know of its existence.

**ALL THE AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WORK MORE TOGETHER.**

Although I know it could become difficult to manage, an online forum where people could post and exchange information may be helpful - to act as a 'one stop shop' for anyone looking for information to this end.

Certain documents (ie housing) have not been done in over 15 years. These need to be re-done in order to improve services offered to people with physical disabilities.

Create a readily recognizable logo as an umbrella for these services?

Form a mailing list for professionals working in community centers and health care settings.

Have accessible web sites. useable by people with vision disabilities, poor motor skills (large easy to 'hit' buttons)

Have one web site to cover most of the needs of disabled people.

I haven't found the right point to start searching or looking for information on services. It seems like there are lots of services out there but many not connected with each other. So I wish there was one good place to start. Someone who stays on top of which services are in place, which have disappeared. DPCR isn't always the one stop place to start looking. Sometimes it seems like one of a number of competing organizations.

It would be helpful to have a website that could address the service needs for people with physical disabilities. The website could be updated regularly and be able to direct the individual to the best possible resource. this could save much telephone research and speed up the process of obtaining services for the client.

I've been diagnosed with a terminal illness only 5 months ago. For some reason, I found it very difficult to understand the coordination behind the various sources of information, let alone learn what their abbreviated forms stood for. I also experienced overlapping from one agency to the next. By the same token, everybody was forthcoming and helpful.

Need a road map sort of to know all the various organizations for disabled and their acronyms- list of them all and who is under who, etc...

Professionals (social workers like me for example) are sometimes the relayers of information to people with physical disabilities. If there was information you think it might be helpful for us to know (housing, food security, income security programs, income supplements, drug benefits, etc) for the purpose of helping our clients access more resources, it may be helpful to have a section on your website geared for workers who are looking for this information.

There is a significant disconnect between hospitals and rehab centres...and the community groups for patients once they are discharged. Patients are largely left on their own to figure out what is available. Hospitals/rehab centres should sponsor the various community groups to come in and present to patients who are approaching discharge.

Yes, I have a speech disability (as well as physical disability) so am unable to make phone contact. It is VERY difficult to come up with info via email access only in my case and some type of solution for this would prove very helpful.

**\* Table provides a sample of the more innovative and provocative responses to this question. Responses appear exactly as written by respondents.**

The comments received from respondents answering the question about how access to information services could be improved provide some interesting insight and helpful direction. Several connected themes arise the most obvious of which are the following:

1. Currently available web-based information sources such as DPCR's Virtual Resource Centre are not known and therefore need to be better advertised or marketed to the community-at-large;
2. People who are new to disability are finding that there isn't an obvious starting point for finding the information they need; and
3. There is a perception that services lack coordination or are disconnected and some confusion about how the "system" works.



## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX I

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Information on services for people with physical disabilities  
in Ottawa: A survey****Who is conducting this survey?**

Disabled Persons Community Resources (DPCR) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the independence, participation and integration of people with physical disabilities in the Ottawa area. The agency has been providing programs and services for people with physical disabilities in the Ottawa area since 1957. In addition to programs and services such as Information and Referral, Individual Support and Barrier-Free Assessments, DPCR is the largest provider of supportive housing in Eastern Ontario. In 2006 DPCR published Ottawa's first Healthcare Guide for People with Disabilities, designed and launched a Virtual Resource Centre ([www.disabilityinfo.ca](http://www.disabilityinfo.ca)) and conducted a comprehensive transit survey as part of its Research and Development Program.

**Why is DPCR conducting this survey?**

DPCR wants to know how individuals learn about services and programs for people with physical disabilities that are available in Ottawa and what specific services and programs they are looking for. The survey was developed with financial support from the United Way / Centraide Ottawa and the results will be used to improve the delivery of information. It consists of 14 questions most of which are multiple choice and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

**Alternative ways to respond.**

We are aware that a survey whether in print format or online may not be accessible for everyone. Please call Terry Gilhen at (613) 724-5886 or send an e-mail at [tgilhen.dpcr@on.aibn.com](mailto:tgilhen.dpcr@on.aibn.com) for assistance with completing the survey or to be interviewed over the phone.

Thank you.

## 1. How did you learn about this survey?

- Newspaper
- DPCR's Website
- Other website
- Newspaper
- Word of Mouth
- Other (Please Specify)

2. How do you prefer to get information? (select only one)

- By telephone;
- Using the internet;
- Television;
- Radio;
- Newspaper;
- Other (Please specify)

3. Do you have access to the internet (select all that apply)

- At home?
- At work / volunteer placement?
- At a public library?
- Other (please specify)

4. How familiar are you with using the internet to find specific information that you require?

- Not at all familiar;
- Somewhat familiar;
- Familiar;
- Very familiar.

5. What sources of information about services or programs for people with physical disabilities do you know? (select all that apply)

- Professionals (i.e. Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Home Care / Attendant staff etc.);
- Family Doctor;
- City of Ottawa;
- Social Services;
- Hospital;
- Disabled Persons Community Resources (DPCR);
- Community Health and Resource Centres;
- Community Information Centre;
- United Way / Centraide Ottawa;
- Family member / Friend;
- Other (Please specify)

6. Where do you go for information about services or programs for people with physical disabilities? (select all that apply)

- Professionals (i.e. Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Home Care / Attendant staff etc.);
- Family Doctor;
- City of Ottawa;
- Social Services;
- Hospital;
- Disabled Persons Community Resources (DPCR);
- Community Health and Resource Centres;
- Community Information Centre;
- United Way / Centraide Ottawa;
- Family member / friend;
- Other (Please specify)

7. What information are you most commonly looking for? (select all that apply)

Information about –

- Accommodation / Housing;
- Accessibility specifications / resources/ funding sources;
- Advocacy;
- Community Supports;
- Counseling;
- Education / Training;
- Employment Supports / Vocational Opportunities;
- Equipment / Supplies;
- Financial Support;
- Legal Matters;
- Recreation / Leisure;
- Transportation;
- Other (please specify)

8. Are you able to get the information you need?

- Never;
- Sometimes;
- Most times;
- Always.

9. Do you have any suggestions for improving access to information on services for people with physical disabilities?

10. Are you (select all that apply)

- A person with a physical disability?
- A family member or friend of a person with a physical disability?
- A person working in social services?
- A politician?
- A government employee?
- A member of the community?
- Other (Please specify)

11. Do you have difficulties with speech or hearing?

- Yes
- No

12. Are you?

- 15-19 years old;
- 20-24 years old;
- 25-54 years old;
- 55-64 years old;
- 65-74 years old;
- 75 or older.

13. Are you?

- Male
- Female

14. Are you? (select all that apply)

- Employed full time?
- Employed part time?
- Unemployed?
- A student?
- A volunteer?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and helping DPCR  
better understand your information needs!**

## APPENDIX II

### **DPCR Research & Development Committee**

Esther Roberts (Chairperson)	Board Member & Consumer
Avril Gunter	Consumer
Alf Gunter	Family Member
Christy Smith-Worthylake	Consumer
Laurie Cucheran-Morris	MS Society, Ottawa Chapter
Joan Black	Board Member DPCR & Consumer
Chris Pomeroy	Family Member
Kim Parks	Visiting Homemakers Association
Stacey Newell	Canadian Paraplegic Association, Ontario
Toni Connolly	Algonquin College
Terry Gilhen	Centre for Students with Disabilities Staff member, DPCR