

Augmentative and Alternative Communication



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Who are we? Advancing Opportunities

- 20 + Years experience in AT
- Serves individuals **with all disabilities**
- Diversity of staff
- Work with state agencies
DVR, DCF, School Districts
DDD, VA, TBI Fund



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YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwgZQTd7adPQZMeUqyRg2gg>

Website:

www.assistivetechologycenter.org



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Technology Lending Center

- Try before you buy
- Borrow for 6 weeks
- Shipped out UPS
- Free
- Contact Tara O'Neill, TLC Coordinator (toneill@advopps.org)
- 609-882-4182 ext. 536



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Who am I?

- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Provide augmentative and alternative communication evaluations and trainings throughout Central/Southern New Jersey for primarily ages 3+



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Agenda for Session

- What is augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)
- Who can benefit from AAC?
- Examples of AAC
- Myths of AAC
- Wrap up/Questions



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What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication?

- Abbreviated AAC
- Augmentative- enhancing oral speech
- Alternative- in place of oral speech



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AAC...

- Encompasses numerous modalities
- Can be used temporarily or permanently
- Can help people understand what is said to them
- Can help people more effectively/efficiently communicate with others



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AAC...

- A set of tools and strategies
- Improve success and effectiveness of communication



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- All communicators use multiple forms of expression in addition to oral speech




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The ability to express oneself is considered
a basic human right
-US National Joint Committee on
Communication Disorders



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National Joint Committee for the
Communication Needs of Persons
With Severe Disabilities (NJCC)

COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS

All people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence. Beyond this general right, a number of specific communication rights should be ensured in all daily interactions and interventions involving persons who have severe disabilities. To participate fully in communication interactions, each person has these fundamental communication rights:

1. The right to interact socially, maintain social closeness, and build relationships
2. The right to request desired objects, actions, events, and people
3. The right to refuse or reject undesired objects, actions, events, or choices
4. The right to express personal preferences and feelings
5. The right to make choices from meaningful alternatives
6. The right to make comments and share opinions
7. The right to ask for and give information, including information about changes in routine and environment
8. The right to be informed about people and events in one's life
9. The right to access interventions and supports that improve communication
10. The right to have communication acts acknowledged and responded to even when the desired outcome cannot be realized
11. The right to have access to functioning AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and other AT (assistive technology) services and devices at all times
12. The right to access environmental contexts, interactions, and opportunities that promote participation as full communication partners with other people, including peers
13. The right to be treated with dignity and addressed with respect and courtesy
14. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
15. The right to have clear, meaningful, and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications

For more information, go to the NJCC website at: www.asha.org/njcc
 Brady, N. C., Baska, S., Goldmas, A., Erickson, K., Mingo, B., Ogline, B. T., Paul, D., Remick, M., Seick, R., Slagel, E., Schoonover, J., Small, M., Sylvester, L., & Wilkinson, K. (2016). Communication services and supports for individuals with severe disabilities: Guidance for assessment and intervention. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 121*(2), 121-138.



Advancing Opportunities

11229

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AAC can...

- Increase independence
- Replace or reduce maladaptive behaviors
- Strengthen social connections
- Allow access to education or vocation



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**CONTENT WARNING- AAC USER
TALKING ABOUT ABUSE**



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Communication Breakdowns

- Misunderstanding or lack of understanding of the intended message
- Increase when emotional
- Can have unintended consequences



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Goal of AAC:

- To increase communication effectiveness
 - Multi-modal communication
 - How the message is communicated is less important than the successful understanding of the message



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Who uses AAC?

- We all use multimodal communication and augment our oral speech
- Complex communication needs can result from developmental or acquired disabilities
 - Childhood/Developmental: intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, Autism, Down syndrome
 - Acquired: trauma, illness, degenerative disease



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- Many people who use AAC to augment their communication have stated that using AAC is beneficial in many situations because they can not always rely on speech to generate a clear message
- AAC is a TOOL
- AAC can be used all the time or part of the time. It is not all or nothing.



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Total Communication

- Supports all attempts at functional communication
- Honor all communicative attempts
- ALL total communicators



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Least Dangerous Assumption

- Can the person communicate more than or better than they already are
- Can we give them another communication modality in addition to what they are using to decrease communication difficulties



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COMMUNICATION AUTONOMY

The ability to say
what you want
when you want
to whomever you want



Rachael Langley AAC Specialist



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When to refer or explore AAC?


- Current mode of expression does not support communication/language abilities
 - With familiar communication partners
 - With unfamiliar communication partners
 - Any part of the day



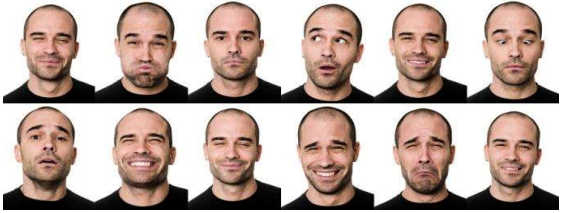

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AAC Modalities




- Unaided
 - Don't require use of anything other than your body
 - Facial expressions, body language, gestures, pointing, Sign Language, vocalizations

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AAC Modalities

- Aided
 - Require other pieces
 - Paper systems, pictures, letter boards, technology (phone/tablet)
 - Things we all do- pen/paper, email/texting, GIFs, emojis



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AAC typically involves symbols

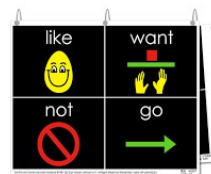
- Symbols represent messages
 - Photographs
 - Line drawings
 - Alphabet/spelling
 - Combinations
 - Sign language is a symbol system



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AAC Examples

- Paper systems:



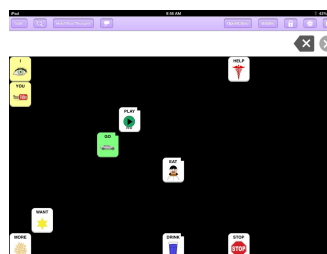
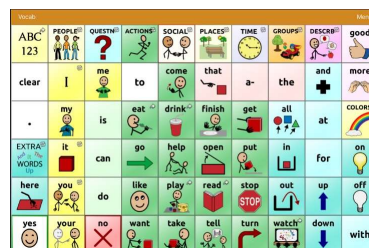
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Technology Options

- Tablets/phones
 - Typically, Apple products, few apps exist for Windows, Android, Kindle
- Touch screen is dynamic
- Includes voice output
- The capacity for more extensive vocabulary



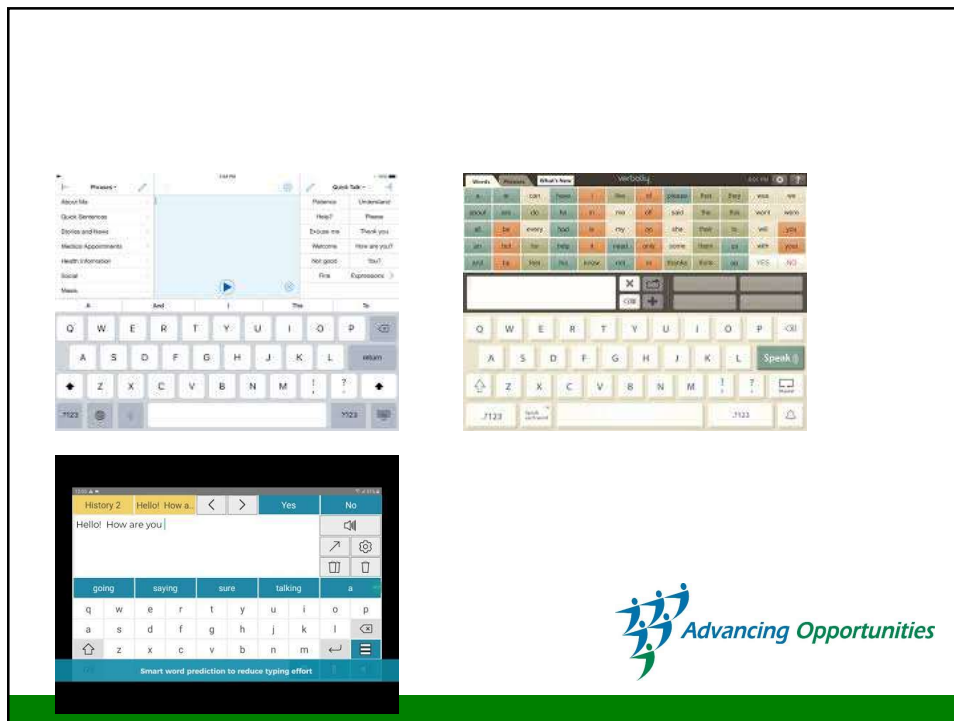
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Technology Options

- Speech Generating Device
 - Designed specifically for face-to-face communication
- Fundable through insurance (private health insurance, Medicare/Medicaid)
- Touch screen
- Includes voice output
- The capacity for more extensive vocabulary storage



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Accessing AAC

- There are options for access for those who have difficulty selecting with their finger on a touch screen
 - Switches
 - Eye gaze/head pointing
 - Key guards
- Do not limit access to communication based on physical abilities



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AAC Barriers:

- Evaluation process
- Lack of collaboration
- Lack of buy-in
- Abandonment/lack of use
 - Up to one third of all AAC users (Zangari and Kangas, 1997; Johnson, 2006)



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AAC User Barriers:

- Staffing
- Funding
- Current communication habits
- Preconceptions of individuals and stakeholders



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Never too late!

- It will take work
- What is the individual already doing?
- What is the motivation?



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Need an AAC evaluation?

- If an adult, seek out an evaluation through DDD Support Coordinator, if school age, request evaluation through child study team.
- Speech-language pathologist with experience in AAC
- Technology can be covered by a variety of funding sources



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We have a system in place, now what?

- AAC is not magic, requires supports
- Once a system is received, therapy with a speech-language pathologist is recommended
 - Caregivers and family will require training to customize, update, and support the AAC system



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- Consistent use by communication partners is essential
 - Aided language input- teach AAC by speaking AAC

To teach AAC,
Speak AAC
PrAACtical AAC



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Myths of AAC

- AAC is a last resort
- Its too early/It's too late
- AAC will inhibit development or use of speech
- There are necessary skills before introducing AAC



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Myths Continued

- Start with limited vocabulary
- High tech AAC is too much screen time
- The person will become dependent on the AAC device and it will become a crutch
- AAC will replace verbal speech



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Local Assistive Technology Resources:

- AAC Brochure:
<https://www.njsha.org/pdfs/brochure-what-is-aac.pdf>
- Advancing Opportunities:
www.assistivetechcenter.org
- Disability Rights New Jersey Assistive Technology Department:
<http://drnj.org/atac/>

