

Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)

Wendy Strickland M.A. CCC-SLP
Speech Language Pathologist
Easterseals Crossroads
wstrickland@eastersealscrossroads.org

Financial Disclosure

- I am employed by Easterseals Crossroads as a Speech Language Pathologist providing AAC and SLP services to children birth to 22 years of age in an outpatient setting.
- I am not receiving an honorarium for this presentation.

Purpose of Communication

- To indirectly control the environment
 - To obtain or reject something
- To regulate social interactions
 - To express an emotion or interact with someone
- To receive and convey information and ideas

What is Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas.
(ASHA.org, 2017)

More Facts

- Does not impede speech development
- Will decrease behaviors related to communication breakdowns
- Bonus!!! May help with speech development

Who should have an AAC evaluation?

- [https://PRC video](https://www.prcvideo.com)

How do I know when a child is ready for AAC?

- No improvement with traditional speech therapy over a period of time.
- A diagnosis that would suggest AAC is going to be needed
- Have a preference for toys, people or activities with no way to express it
- Initiating communication in other ways
- No prerequisite

AAC Acquisition Process @ Easterseals Crossroads

- Referral
- Evaluation
- Trial Period if recommended
- Purchase if recommended
- Ongoing Therapy and Training

Things to consider when selecting alternative communication

- Age
- Diagnosis
- Physical Development
- Cognitive Development
- Environment
- Family Support
- Access method
- Lifestyle
- Behaviors

One size DOES NOT fit all!!

- Experienced evaluator
- Try different methods of AAC
- Try different devices, apps and programs
- Keep an open mind
- Do your research

Choosing an AAC system is a **TEAM EFFORT**

- Child
- Parents
- Caregivers
- Teachers
- Other family members
- Doctor
- Therapists

Access Method

- How an individual makes selections for communication.
 - Reaching for pictures or objects
 - Touch Screen
 - Key guards/Touch guides/delay on screen
 - Eye gaze
 - Switch-How many and where will it be located?
 - Head Pointing

Types of AAC Systems

Objects

- Smaller versions of real items
- Good for individuals who do not understand that a picture represents something
- Perfect for individuals with a vision impairment
- Limited vocabulary

Pictures

- **PECS**

- Structured learning system to teach language
- Quick to set up
- Cheap
- Easy to use
- No voice
- Someone has to make the pictures/laminate/velcro
- Pictures get lost
- Pictures are used for play

- **Pictures/Picture Boards**

- No structured learning
- Basic requesting
- Easy to set up
- Cheap

Voice Output Communication Aide

VOCA

- Easy to set up
- Recorded message
- Will have a voice
- Cheaper
- Can have core words
- Limited vocabulary
- Not durable

Speech Generating Device SGD

- Can have a lot of vocabulary = more language - yay!!
- Computer generated voice
- Built in camera
- Core words
- Durable
- Features to make the devices more accessible such as key guards, touch guides, scanning, delays on the touch screen, eye gaze and head pointing.

Tablets with apps

- Can be cheaper
- Easy to access
- Accessories such as cases and key guards can be purchased to increase accessibility and durability
- Distracting if child likes to play with tablets
- Warranties?
- Have to pay for training for apps

FUNDING

- Insurance
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- Grants
- Private Pay
- School

4 Keys to AAC Success

(Prentke Romich Parent Guide, prentrom.com)

- Keep it handy
- Keep it fun
- Keep it interesting
- Keep it up

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