

What is Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)?
How can it help your consumer, and you?

“Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. People with severe speech or language problems rely on AAC to supplement existing speech or replace speech that is not functional. Special augmentative aids, such as picture and symbol communication boards and electronic devices, are available to help people express themselves.”

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AAC/>

No Tech AAC

- Facial Expression
- Body Posture/Position
- Head nods and shakes
- Reaching/Pointing
- Gesture/Signs
- Partner Assisted Scanning (PAS)



Low Tech AAC

- Pictures/Symbols
- Communication boards
- Communication books
- Simple voice output devices (e.g., Big Mack, Step-by-Step)
- Aided Language Stimulation (modeling)



High Tech AAC

- Digital or Synthesized voice options
- Dynamic Display Voice output devices:
 - iPad/tablet systems
 - Dedicated communication devices



Alternative Access

- Keyguard
- Joy Stick
- Trackpad or Trackball
- 1- or 2-Switch Scanning
- Head Pointing



Myths About AAC

Myth: AAC specialized services are separate from other communication goals (e.g., in treatment plans or IEP).

Fact: AAC therapy is Language Therapy! The team's role is to coordinate with all providers, develop a plan for implementing communication strategies, and provide support and training to families and providers for carryover across environments.

Myth: A child needs prerequisite "readiness skills" before using AAC.

Fact: Children are born ready to communicate. AAC can and should be introduced and taught to children of all skill levels.

Myth: AAC will hinder speech development. If a child uses AAC, they will stop talking.

Fact: Research shows that AAC tools and strategies support speech and language development and children who can speak in any capacity will use that option that first.

Where can I look for AAC resources in my state?

AT Connects (Federal)

- Assistive Technology Act of 2004 supports assistive tech programs in each state:
 - List of AT Act Programs:
<http://www.atconnects.com/at-act-programs/state-at-act-programs>
 - Legal Assistance & Advocacy Programs:
<http://www.atconnects.com/at-act-programs/legal-assistance-advocacy>
 - Funding Options:
<http://www.atconnects.com/at-act-programs/funding>

Local AAC Service Providers (State)

- Hospital AAC Programs
- Outpatient Therapy Clinics
- Private Therapy Centers / Providers
- Department of Human Services
- University Communication Sciences & Disorders Programs
- AAC and SGD Vendor Companies
- Summer Camps
(<https://www.prentrom.com/camps>)

AAC / SGD Loaning Libraries

- Many State AT Act Programs also have AAC loaning libraries
- State Educational Service Agencies (e.g., CESA in Wisconsin, AEA in Iowa)
- AAC Vendor Company Product Loans
- Speech Generating Device (SGD) Company Product Loans
- AAC Clinic Loaning Programs
- Regional Independent Living Centers

AAC Funding Options

- Insurance / HMO (varies by company)
- Medicare (nation wide)
- Medical Assistance (varies by state)
- Department of Human Services Programs (e.g., Children's Long-Term Support Waiver)
- Philanthropic Organizations (e.g., Lions Clubs, Knights of Columbus)
- Donations / Crowd Funding
- Private Pay