



Speech-Language Pathology

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Kids are great! We just make'em better.®

Learning About Augmentative And Alternative Communication (AAC)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is any system or method that improves the ability of a child with a communication impairment to communicate more effectively. The communication impairment may be temporary or permanent and may be congenital (present at birth), acquired (occurring later in life), or degenerative (worsening over time). AAC strategies can range from facial expressions and gestures to sign language and voice output devices. The purpose for AAC is not to take the place of a child's current communication strategies, but rather has the purpose to aid their current communication.

When AAC may be beneficial:

- Current risk factors for a communication impairment (i.e., developmental delay, Cerebral Palsy, Autism, trach)
- The child is experiencing frustration when communicating
- Difficulty understanding the child
- Reliance on non-speech modes of communication (e.g., relies on gestures to communicate)
- Spoken language has either not developed or has been lost

Examples of how AAC will be beneficial for the child:

When we communicate we have one of four underlying reasons for communicating; these reasons include social/pragmatics/greetings, requesting/rejecting information, responding to requests, and sharing information. Different examples of how AAC can be used during the day include the following:

- For choice making (e.g., which toy to play with)
- Social greeting in morning meeting
- To answer other various questions that may come up during the day
- Sharing personally relevant information (e.g., sharing about a special event)
- Use of "good bye" when leaving a room
- Requesting use of the bathroom, help, or toys

Next Step

- Contact your current Speech-Language Pathologist to determine if they are currently using any AAC strategies with your child
- Discuss your concerns with your child's pediatrician; they may be able to provide you with some local outside resources