
A Guide to Embedding AAC Use into Daily Routines and Activities

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Introduction

- Speaker background and financial disclosures
- Speech-Language Pathologist with over 15 years of experience working in a variety of settings, including public schools, private practice, and early intervention.
- Founder and CEO of VoiceTech, LLC

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify the steps involved in embedding AAC use into clients' daily routines and activities.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies for addressing common barriers that limit the effectiveness of AAC use within clients' natural environment.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies for effective caregiver collaboration in promoting generalization of communication skills.

Definition of AAC

“Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) describes multiple ways to communicate that can supplement or compensate (either temporarily or permanently) for the impairment and disability patterns of individuals with severe expressive communication disorders.”

Source: American Speech-Language and Hearing Association

Overview of AAC Tools and Devices

AAC can be any of the following:

- Unaided
 - Gestures
 - Facial expressions
 - Manual signs
 - American Sign Language (ASL)
- Aided
 - Communication boards
 - Computers
 - Speech-generating devices

Purpose of AAC

- To enhance the ability of individuals with communication disorders to express themselves effectively in all environments they are part of.
- To supplement existing communication modalities for individuals with communication disorders.
- To compensate for communication skills that have been lost or impacted by injury or disease.

Barriers to Consistency in AAC Use

- Lack of client motivation
- Lack of availability or accessibility of AAC systems
- Inadequate or inconsistent teacher/caregiver training
- Decontextualized learning
- Types of vocabulary available in AAC systems

Step 1: Functional Profile

Case History

- Identify relevant events from the client's case history:
 - Types of AAC tools and devices used previously
 - Effectiveness of AAC tools and devices used previously
 - Barriers identified with previous AAC use
 - Caregiver knowledge of and comfort level with using AAC tools and devices

- Use data collected from the client's case history to identify:
 - Types of AAC tools and devices to trial with the client
 - Caregiver needs for training and education

Developmental Profile

- Identify client's functional skills in the following areas:
 - Sensory-motor development
 - Social-emotional development
 - Cognitive development
 - Receptive and expressive communication

- Identify caregivers' specific goals and priorities for communication:
 - Type, frequency, and context of communication

Developmental Profile

- Use data collected on client's functional skills to determine the impact of any of the following areas on AAC use:
 - Sensory-motor development
 - Social-emotional development
 - Cognitive development
 - Receptive and expressive communication
- Use data collected on caregivers' specific goals and priorities for communication to identify needs for training and education.

Step 2: Routines-based Interview

Demographic Profile

- Identify relevant factors about the client and the environments they are a part of:
 - Home environment
 - Classroom environment
 - Other environments
- Use data collected on each environment the client is a part of to identify:
 - Exposure to vocabulary
 - Communication partners
 - Natural communication opportunities

Daily Routines and Activities

- Identify the client's daily routines and activities:
 - Where they go regularly
 - What they do regularly
 - Who they interact with regularly

- Use data collected on each routine or activity to identify:
 - Exposure to vocabulary
 - Communication partners
 - Natural communication opportunities

Step 3: AAC Assessment

Strategies for Effective AAC Assessments

- Use dynamic assessments to determine the client's unique communication needs.
- Trial multiple AAC tools and devices in order to get a complete picture of which modalities are most appropriate for the client's unique communication needs.
- Use data collected from client's functional profile to identify AAC tools and devices that are most likely to be compatible with the client's natural environment.

Step 4: Teacher/Caregiver Education

Strategies for Effective Caregiver Collaboration

- Use data collected from the routines-based interview and other sources to identify caregivers' main priorities.
- Educate caregivers on the value of AAC use for augmenting overall communication skills, as well as for the specific priorities they have expressed.
- Provide caregivers with evidence to support the effectiveness of AAC use to support overall communication skills, as well as for the specific priorities they have expressed.
- Create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals that incorporate caregivers' priorities and daily activities.

Strategies for Effective Caregiver Collaboration

- Provide caregiver counseling or refer to other providers as appropriate.
- Provide ongoing training and hands on practice on the use of AAC tools and devices during clients' daily routines and activities.

References

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Thank You!

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