AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC) ASSESSMENT

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) includes various modes of communication: facial expressions, gestures, sign language, picture symbols, writing, and voice-output devices. AAC provides a way for individuals who have difficulties communicating to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. Those that may benefit from AAC include:

- Individuals who have a few words or sounds but are delayed in their normal speech
- Individuals with significant speech delays who have difficulties coordinating the movements necessary to produce sounds and move from one sound to another
- Individuals experiencing difficulties with their vocal cords which may cause limited or no voice
- Individuals who have had a stroke, and who struggle to come up with the right word

Speech can be frustrating to those who know what they want to say but are unable to make the right movements for speech to happen. It is your right as a parent, caregiver, or professional to ask the teacher, SLP, or case manager for an evaluation to determine whether the adult or child would benefit from AAC. Even if the individual is already receiving speech-language services, he or she may still benefit from AAC services. Remember, the goal of AAC is to improve communication; these interventions will not discourage or suppress an individual from learning to speak.

Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources (WATR) provides comprehensive Augmentative and Alternative Communication assessments that are dynamic and on-going. Individuals are observed across settings to assess various cognitive, social, receptive, and expressive language skills. Often parent interviews, inventories, and checklists are gathered to provide information on the individual’s current communication methods, use, and understanding of language. Occupational and physical therapists may assess motor control, accessing issues, positioning, and adaptive equipment. The individual’s skills are matched to the device features and carefully assessed in order to recommend and trial communication devices. Communication devices are often brought to the evaluation for demonstration and hands-on experience.

Devices can also be checked out using WATR’s loan program to help determine if the device will meet the individual’s communication needs. A written report will be provided that outlines recommendations and an action plan that identifies a timeline, resources, and persons responsible for monitoring the devices. One-time assessment plans will include a follow-up meeting to review the evaluation results. The AAC assessment plan for one year will include multiple meetings, consultations, re-assessment, and follow-up services. Follow-up services may include environmental adaptations, training for the communication partners, technical assistance with programming and updating the device, and recommended device interventions to strengthen the success of the device implementation.

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