



# Texas Beacons of Excellence

## Augmentative & Alternative Communication: Part One

A Partnership Led by:



TEXAS  
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES



# Communication First:

## Setting the Stage for Workplace Success

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Melanie Derry, M.S., CCC-SLP  
Derrym@vcu.edu



# Emoji Pictionary: Workplace Edition



+



**Clocking in**



+



**Lunch Meeting**



+

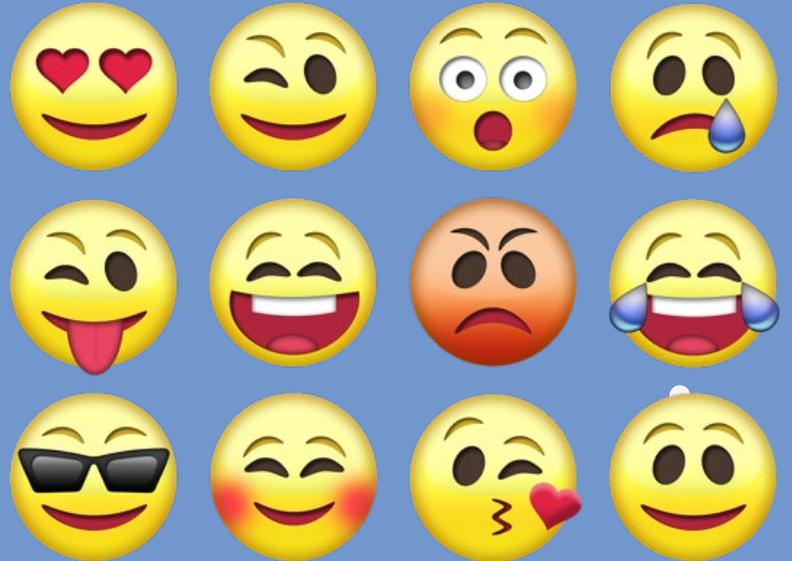


**Asking for Help**

# Getting to know YOU!

## Introduce Yourself

- Use 3-5 emojis
- No words
- Include things like:  
your mood, favorite  
part of your job, or a  
hobby



# What we'll cover

**01**

**Stats & Research**

**02**

**Communication &  
AAC 101**

**03**

**SETT Framework  
for Considering  
AAC**

# Notable Stats



35-40% of autistic people are nonspeaking or use minimal speech

>350,000 people expected to need AAC as a *primary* communication modality

# What else do we know?

## Literacy

An estimated **90%** of individuals with complex communication needs (CCN) reach adulthood without functional literacy skills  
(Foley & Wolter, 2010)

## Employment

**Less than 5%** of AAC users are employed full time  
(McNaughton, Light, & Arnold, 2003)

## Job Loss

Risk of job loss for people with disabilities due to difficulty with social and communication skills is **astounding**  
(Sung et al., 2019)

# How do you....

...signal to a co-worker that a meeting is running way too long without interrupting the speaker?

...quietly encourage a client who is feeling nervous during a job interview or on their first day of work?

...remind yourself of a specific task you need to do for a client later today while you're currently driving or in the middle of another task?

...tell a friend you're too exhausted to talk on the phone after a long day of coaching, but you still want to acknowledge their message?

# Ways We Communicate

Writing/  
Texting



Facial  
Expressions



Gestures



AAC  
Devices



Speaking



Sign  
Language



# Reasons We Communicate

COMMENT

REQUEST

GREET/SOCIAL EXCHANGES

PROTEST/REJECT/REFUSE

EXPRESS FEELINGS

GAIN/DIRECT ATTENTION

ASK/ANSWER QUESTIONS

SHARE OPINIONS/STORIES



• **Can your clients  
communicate...**

**...anything they want?  
...whenever they want?  
...however they want?  
...to whomever they  
want?**



# What does AAC stand for?

## Augmentative

A supplement;  
any form of  
communication  
that adds to a  
person's speech

## Alternative

Anything that  
is used to  
communicate in  
place of speech

## Communication

The ability to  
exchange  
thoughts and  
ideas

# AAC Continuum

## NO TECH

### UNAIDED COMMUNICATION

No additional tools or technology needed. Requires only the user's body.



## LIGHT TECH

### AIDED COMMUNICATION

Utilizes various symbols/tools which do not require electronics.



## MID TECH

### VOICE OUTPUT COMMUNICATION AIDS

Typically, battery-operated with a static non-changing display, simpler functions, and recorded voice output.



## HIGH TECH

### DYNAMIC SYSTEMS

A dynamic, changing display using a computerized screen. Typically utilizes computer-generated voice output and requires a power source.



No  
tech

Paper  
based

Screen  
Based

# AAC CONTINUUM



# Who may need AAC?

- **Congenital Disabilities**
- **Acquired Disabilities**
- **Neurological Differences**

# Communication Profiles of AAC Users

“When I could not effectively communicate, there were a lot of assumptions made about me. Once I was able to communicate via iPad, I was able to debunk those myths and direct my own life.”

–**JORDYN ZIMMERMAN**  
NONSPEAKING AUTISTIC ADVOCATE



1. Nonspeaking
2. Uses single words or minimal use of spoken language
3. Inconsistent access to speech
4. Echolalia (Immediate or Delayed; “scripting”)
5. Minimally intelligible due to difficulty with articulation or dysfluency/stuttering

Image Credit: <https://carolynkiel.com/podcast/inclusive-education-jordyn-zimmerman-nonspeaking-autistic-advocate/>

# Consider Your Clients:

- CLARITY
- EFFICACY
- CONNECTION



# Recognizing Communication Gaps

**1. Behavior as Communication**

**1. The YES/NO Trap**

**1. Missed Opportunities**

**1. Safety & Advocacy**



# Consideration of Assistive Technology: Adapting the SETT Framework



**SOMEONE**

Person's strengths,  
interests, & needs



**ENVIRONMENT**

Where they live,  
work, & socialize



**TASK**

What they need to  
do to be more  
independent



**TOOL(S)**

Possible solutions  
to support  
completion of  
tasks

# SETT Framework: Questions to Ask



**SOMEONE**

- **Strengths and abilities**
- **Needs**
- **Available information**
- **Client's expectations**

# SETT Framework: Questions to Ask



**E**

**ENVIRONMENT**

- **Current supports and barriers**
- **Instructional supports needed**
- **Environmental supports needed**
- **Attitudes and expectations**

# SETT Framework: Questions to Ask



**T**



**TASK**

- **Essential functions of the job**
- **Non-routine activities**
- **Informal work activities or interactions**

# SETT Framework: Questions to Ask



**T**



**TOOL(S)**

- **Tool(s) needed to support job performance and success**
- **Communication partner supports needed**

# Bridging the Gap

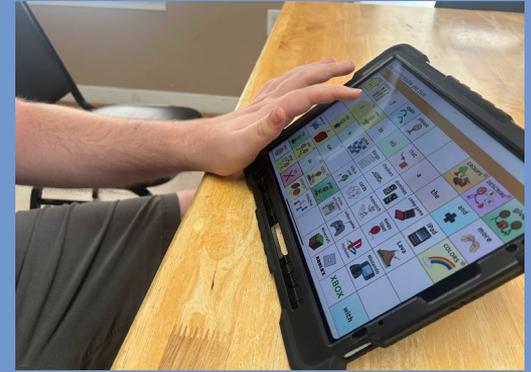
- **CLARITY:**  
Communication boards and visual schedules that everyone is trained to use
- **EFFICACY:**  
Ensuring job-specific vocabulary is available on a communication board or device
- **CONNECTION:**  
Programming personally-relevant and frequently used social phrases to allow for quick exchanges/banter



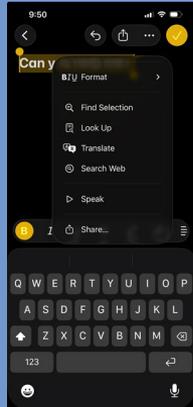
Visual Schedule



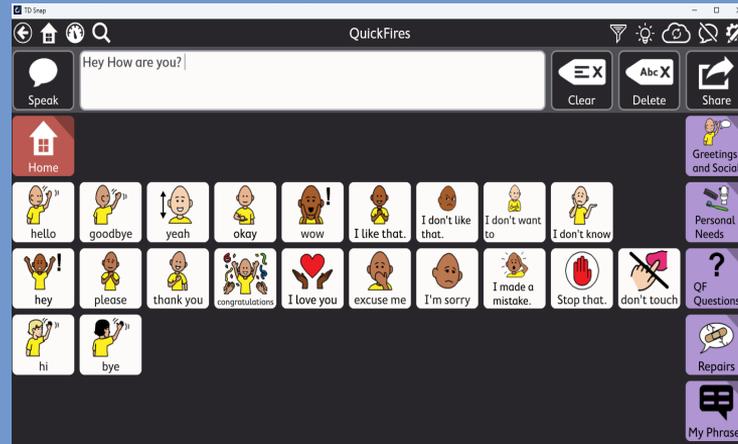
Communication Book



iPad with AAC App



Text-to-Speech



Quick-fire Phrases



Communication Lanyard



**CAUTION:  
AAC is NOT  
a quick fix  
or a magic  
wand**

 LAMP Words For Life®  
For Accent and PRIO support visit: [prentrom.com](http://prentrom.com)  
For app support visit: [aacapps.com](http://aacapps.com)

Εχει τελειώσει	Δικό μου	Μικρό	Πάνω	Ναι	Καλό	Λίγο	Όχι	Κάτω	Έξω	Από	Κακό
Εμένα	Μου	Φοράω	Είμαι	Παρακαλώ	Ότι	Και	Μέσα	Τι; (-λέξη) ? word	Ενα* a	Πολλά +s	Εκεί
Εγώ	Εμείς	είσαι	Είναι (-ει)	Ήμουν (-να)	Ήταν (-σα)	Πάνω (-μένος)	Να (να+)	Γράμμα(τα) αριθμοί	ενας/μία/ένα (+τερος)	Ο (ο πια)	Τέλος
Εσύ	Αυτοί	Νέο	Παίζω	Μου αρτσει	Δουλεύω	Έχω	Νιώθω	Διαβάζω	Κι άλλο	Γρήγορα	σταμάτα
Αυτό	Αυτός	Θέλω	Όλοι	Ερχομαι	Όρα	Κάνω	Πηγαίνω	παίρνω	Μεγάλο	Χρώμα	Βοήθεια
Αυτή	κοιτάω	Αργά	Ακούω	Σκέφτομαι	Δεξιά	Είπα	Μένω	Αγαπώ	Ακολουθώ	Οδηγώ	Βάζω
Καθαρισμός	Δεν	Μιλώ	Κάθομαι	τρώω	Βρίσκω	Φτιάχνω	Χρεάζομαι	πίνω	Βλέπω	Γυρνάω	κοιμάμαι

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“Just like a piano alone doesn’t make a pianist, nor does a basketball make an athlete, **an AAC device alone doesn’t make one a competent, proficient communicator.** Those who rely on AAC strategies begin as AAC novices and evolve in competence to become AAC experts with *support, encouragement, role models, and teaching strategies.*”

–David Beukelman, Ph.D.



# Helpful Resources

## Texas Assistive Technology Funding Guide:

- <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/dirc/atfundingguide.html#Sources%20of%20Funding>

## Popular AAC companies:

- PRC-Salttillo
  - <https://prc-salttillo.com/>
- Tobii Dynavox
  - <https://us.tobiidynavox.com/>
- AssistiveWare
  - <https://www.assistiveware.com/products/proloquo2go>
- Talk to Me Technologies
  - <https://www.talktometechnologies.com/>

# Additional Resources

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)*. ASHA.org. <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/>.

Richardson, L., McCoy, A., & McNaughton, D. (2019). “He’s worth the extra work”: The employment experiences of adults with ASD who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) as reported by adults with ASD, family members, and employers. *Work*, 62(2), 205–219. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-192856>

Van Diepen, M., & Bedoyan, J. (2023). *AAC visualized: A visual guide to augmentative and alternative communication*.



# Join us for Part 2: AAC Implementation!

## Thursday, March 19, 2026

### 2-3pm



# Thank You

