

# Augmentative and Alternative Communication Program

The Augmentative and Alternative Communication Program at Stanford Medicine Children's Health offers evaluations and short-term treatment for children and young adults who cannot communicate using speech alone. This handout will tell you more about AAC and how this program can help your child.

## What is Augmentative and Alternative Communication?

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication**, also called **AAC**, is a set of different ways people can communicate without speaking. This can make it easier for people who have trouble speaking to express their needs and feelings. AAC does not stop a child from learning to speak. Research has shown that AAC can help with speech and language development.

There are many types of AAC, and a person may use more than one type of AAC to communicate. Some common AAC communication methods include:

- Gestures
- Body movements
- Sign language
- Writing
- Alphabet boards
- Communication books
- Objects, photos, or drawings
- Apps on an iPad or tablet
- Speech-generating devices, also called SGDs

## Who should use AAC?

If your child has a severe communication disorder, is nonverbal, or has a progressive condition that makes speech difficult, their care team may recommend AAC. In some cases, AAC will be the main way that a child communicates. In other cases, a child may use a combination of AAC and speech. Some people use AAC for the rest of their lives, and others use AAC for only a short time.

## What does the AAC Program offer?

We provide the following services:

- Evaluations to choose AAC tools for your child.
- Sessions to try out different types of AAC.
- Programming and training for AAC apps.
- Help with getting insurance coverage for communication devices.
- Short-term treatment to work on specific communication goals.
- Family training to help you use AAC at home.

## I think my child needs an AAC device. How can I get one?

If you think your child needs an AAC device, the first step is to have an evaluation with a **speech-language pathologist**, also called an **SLP**. They will work with your child to try out different options so you can choose a device that will work for your child. If you are choosing a long-term AAC device, it is important to think about how the device will work for your child over the next few years. It usually takes more than one session to choose an AAC device.

Once you choose an AAC device for your child, you can apply for it in one of the following ways:

- Through your child's school district.
- Private insurance.
- Medi-Cal.
- Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program, or DDTP.
- Voice Options program for iPads with certain AAC applications.
- Buying the device on your own.

The process and timing for getting a communication device will be different depending on how you are paying for it. Your SLP can help by giving you a written AAC evaluation and connecting you with an outside vendor. **Stanford does not provide AAC devices directly, so you will need to work with your insurance or vendor to get an AAC device for your child.**

## How do I schedule an appointment?

If you are interested in having an AAC evaluation at Stanford Children's Health, please have your child's physician write a referral to **Speech-Language Pathology** for an AAC Evaluation. Your child's primary care provider can fax the referral to **(650) 721-2884**. Once you are ready to schedule, please call **Rehabilitation Services** at **(650) 736-2000**.

## What should I bring to my appointment?

Please bring the following to your appointment:

- Any AAC tools or devices your child uses. If you cannot bring the tools or devices, please bring pictures of them.
- A copy of your child's most recent IEP.
- Any outside AAC evaluation reports.
- Any outside vision evaluation reports.
- Contact information for any outside SLPs who currently work with your child.

## Where can I learn more about the AAC program?

To learn more about our AAC program, please visit our website using this QR code:



**Author:** Speech Language Pathology

**Health Literacy Review:** The Office of Patient/Family Education and Health Literacy