



Autism Society
Inland Empire



AAC Resource Toolkit

2023



Inland Empire Resources for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Communication is one of the primary areas of difficulty for persons who experience Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Estimates show 25% to 35% of children with ASD cannot use spoken language reliably and have less than 20 words or so. ¹

Communication is a fundamental human right. Every individual should be able to express themselves independently. No matter what age the person is, it is never too late to update and improve access to AAC communication supports for a person with Autism – but it will come with work on having to learn and practice this way of communication. This Resource Guide was developed to help individuals and families find these supports.

Special thank you to Sydney and Lisa Edmond for contributing to this resource and their never-ending championing of everyone having a voice.

If you have any additions or corrections, you can contact us at info@ieAutism.org

Sincerely,

Beth Burt
Executive Director

The Autism Society Inland Empire Autism (ASIE) maintains these Resource Listings as a service to families as a reference tool. Every effort is made to ensure listings are up to date. ASIE does not endorse or claim to have personal knowledge of the abilities of those listed. The resources listed are not intended as a recommendation, referral, or endorsement of any resource or as a tool for verifying any organization, product or professional's credentials, qualifications, or abilities. Users are urged to use independent judgment and request references when considering any resource associated with the diagnosis or treatment of Autism or the provision of services related to Autism.

1. Rose V, Trembath D, Keen D, Paynter J. The proportion of minimally verbal children with Autism spectrum disorder in a community-based early intervention programme. J Intellect Disabil Res. 2016 May;60(5):464-77. doi: 10.1111/jir.12284. PMID: 27120989.

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What Is AAC

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is a bundle of strategies to address the needs of individuals with disabilities who are non-speaking or whose natural speech doesn't meet their needs. AAC strategies include many forms of communication that can be used to express needs, ideas, and thoughts. The aim is to get AAC users to produce spontaneous, novel, functional communication.

AAC systems can be categorized into two sections Unaided and Aided.

Unaided AAC includes those we use, along with spoken language, that does not require any external tools, such as gestures and sign language. However, some research shows that these are not an appropriate interventions for children with Autism, as they may be ineffective.

Aided AAC are systems that use external tools and devices. Aided systems are divided into two categories high- and low-tech systems.

- Low-tech systems have AAC strategies that involve the use of equipment that is not electronic. These tools are often paper-based and contain books and charts. Low-tech AAC includes Communication Boards, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), and PIC. Electronic equipment allows users to use pictures and letters to create messages. Some of the devices can be programmed to speak.
- High-tech systems tend to be electronic communication devices or apps. These can be simple message boards, speech-generating devices (SGD), or complex computer-based communication systems. Examples of High Tech systems are Go Talk, tablets, iPads, Dynavox.

There are many types of AAC options available with different functions and costs. It is essential to make an informed choice in matching the device to the strengths and needs of the AAC user. It is important to complete a communication or AAC assessment for the right match and be prepared that parents, teachers, therapists, etc will need to be trained on the system.

Funding Pathways

School District	Insurance	Private Pay/Grants
<p>Students receiving special education services have a legal right to AAC assessments and support to meet their communication needs. School districts are looking for educational necessities. i.e., when an iPad allows your child to participate in a Free and Public Education (FAPE).</p>	<p>Insurance companies are looking for medical necessities, i.e., if a medical condition, such as Apraxia, limits your child's ability to speak. Insurance may cover the cost of medically necessary AAC devices with a prescription from a medical provider or Speech Language Pathologist, or even a BCBA.</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Request an AAC assessment in writing from the school district (letter or email) or have it notated in the IEP. 2. Work with an SLP or AAC Specialist to complete AAC assessment and identify appropriate AAC strategy. 3. If approved, an IEP will be held. Ensure you update the IEP goals to include the AAC strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training & consultation time teacher and staff will receive - Training time for parent - Hardware and software needed - Require AAC device will always remain with student (to practice at home) - Update goals (for example, <i>By XXX, during structured language activities, X will use the speech generating device for 3 different functions per activity (request repetition, comment, label, request an item, refuse, request assistance, greet, ask a question, request clarification, etc.) with two verbal or gestural prompts, with 75% accuracy measured through observation, 3 data collection opportunities per grading period.</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact your health insurance case coordinator (or call the number on the back of your card) to request what your policy covers for Durable Medical Equipment (DME) or assistive technology. A doctor or SLP may need to complete the request. 2. Consult a speech-language pathologist to complete an AAC assessment and identify appropriate AAC strategies. Your insurance company will require proof that a device and training is medically necessary. 3. After you obtain the device, you will need to work with a speech-language pathologist to provide training to the AAC user, caregivers, and service providers. 4. Practice! This is like learning a new language. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Want to practice or explore different AAC devices? Rolling Start 2. Your Health Savings Accounts, Flexible Spending Accounts or ABLE accounts may fund assistive technology. 3. The Autism Society Inland Empire maintains a list of agencies that may be able to provide financial assistance. We have also included a list of agencies on the next page which specialize in funding AAC devices, https://ieAutism.org/grants/

Organizations Which May Fund AAC Devices to Families

Some organizations specialize in getting funds to children who need them. Applying for an iPad through these organizations is not guaranteed, but it's worth a shot!

- **Apraxia Kids**
www.apraxia-kids.org/speech-tablets-for-apraxia
Each year, Apraxia Kids awards speech tablets to children and families in need throughout the USA and Canada. Children with Apraxia can use these speech tablets for speech practice and/or as a speech-generating device.
- **Autism Care Today (ACT)**
www.act-today.org/apply-for-grant
Autism Care Today provides funding assistance to families throughout the United States quarterly. These grants are designed to provide access to individuals and families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders. Distributes grants quarterly up to \$5000.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation - <https://myasdf.org/>**
Applications open in May and October for iPad for Kids Program.
<https://avenuesforautism.org/funding/> Can help families pay for autism services not covered by traditional insurance or grants. Such services include early intervention programs, assessments and testing, social skills programs, college support programs, transition-to-employment programs, touch devices, and recreational activities. Award amounts depend on fund availability, yearly fundraising activities, and the number of qualified applications received.
- **Avenues for Autism – Suzanne Tyner Autism Fund**
<https://avenuesforautism.org/funding/>
Fund to help families pay for autism services not covered by traditional insurance or grants. Such services include early intervention programs, assessments and testing, social skills programs, college support programs, transition-to-employment programs, touch devices, and recreational activities. Award amounts depend on fund availability, yearly fundraising activities, and the number of qualified applications received.
- **Lilly's Voice - www.lillysvoice.org**
Assists people with Autism and who are non-verbal that have been rejected by other programs and cannot afford an AAC device without help.

- **The National Autism Association Give a Voice Program**

<https://nationalautismassociation.org/family-support/programs/naas-give-a-voice-program/>

The National Autism Association (NAA) has a Give a Voice Program a grant program to provide devices to nonverbal and minimally verbal individuals as well as a program offering access to certified practitioners in S2C (Spelling 2 Communicate) and RPM (Rapid Prompting Method) while continuing to provide our iPad AAC program. They also have several downloadable toolkits and resources.

- **Small Steps in Speech** - www.smallstepsinspeech.org/

The mission of Small Steps in Speech is to help children with speech and/or language disorders take the steps needed to be better communicators. They offer grants to purchase communication devices (including iPads) nationwide on behalf of children between 3 and 22 years of age at the time of the application deadline and families with a combined household income under \$100,000. Deadline to apply is Feb

Southern CA Speech Pathologists Who Specialize in AAC

AAC Connections

Darlene Hanson, C.C.C.

Whitter, CA

www.aacconnections.org

Darlene is a national expert of AAC. Can conduct AAC assessments, Speech and Language and AAC therapy, trainings, and communication partner therapy. Provides comprehensive services to those who have limited communication, are non-speaking and use Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC). Therapy can be provided in the home or through Telehealth. Speech therapy addresses the development of speech using oral motor skills, and practice.

Assistive Technology Exchange Center (ATEC) a program of Good Will of Orange County

1601 East St. Andrew Place, Santa Ana

(714) 361.6200

www.ocgoodwill.org/changing-lives/assistive-technology-exchange-center

Performs AAC assessments for the ATEC program of Goodwill of Orange County. They do assessments for a wide range of different devices from low-tech to high-tech and they work with individuals of all ages. They contract with schools, regional centers, and Dept. of Rehab, and they accept private insurance as well as Medi-Cal.

Augmentative Communication Therapies

Cindy Cottier, M.A., M.Ed., C.C.C., SLP

960 E. Green St., Suite # 203

Pasadena, CA 91106

(626) 351-5402

www.cacottier.com

Cynthia A. Cottier is a Speech-Language Pathologist who has been working in the field of Augmentative and Alternative, Communication (AAC) since 1980. She developed the AAC program for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) during a seven-year stint and went into private practice in 1992. She has extensive experience working directly with individuals ranging in age from 2 to 75+ years and of all disabilities. In addition, Ms. Cottier has a vast knowledge of a wide variety of state-of-the-art augmentative and assistive systems, techniques and strategies.

Autistically Inclined (Julie Sando Johnston)

Southern California

www.autisticallyinclined.com

Text: (413)329-6200

Email: support@autisticallyinclined.com

Teaches Text-based Communication (ex: Letterboards, Keyboards, etc) to non-speaking persons with Autism, their families, and providers. Both direct service and online training available.

Susan Berkowitz, M.S., M.Ed., C.C.C., SLP

San Diego, CA

(619) 980-0347

<http://susanberkowitz.net/>

Susan Berkowitz is a speech therapist who serves the San Diego and Orange County areas. She also serves Riverside County, San Bernardino County, and occasionally Imperial County. She has been in practice for over 30 years, and she provides AAC assessments for no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech solutions for people with communication difficulties. She conducts environmental evaluations for the implementation of communication skills programs. She consults to schools, parents, day programs, and residential programs, and she assists with setting intervention programs into place. She will also provide programming and training of AAC devices for her clients.

High Desert Speech and Language Center

12241 Industrial Blvd. Suite 201, Victorville

(760) 952-2333

www.highdesertspeech.com

This clinic can assist with Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), AAC assessments and Relationship Development Intervention. The center accepts private health insurance and credit cards.

Lucid Speech and Language Center

Megan McCann, M.A., CCC-SLP

25102 Jefferson Avenue, Suite D, Murrieta (951) 461.1190

11870 Pierce Street, Suite 150, Riverside (951) 808.5850

27192 Newport Rd, Suite 1, Menifee (951) 566.4444

31205 Pauba Road, Suite 103, Temecula (951) 951.693.9600

www.lucidspeech.com

This clinic has speech therapists who practice in the area of augmentative and alternative communication and who can perform AAC assessments for a wide range of devices. The clinic accepts most major forms of health insurance and payment by credit card.

Resource for Education, Advocacy, Communication and Housing (REACH)

9300 Santa Fe Springs Rd., Santa Fe Springs
562-946-0467 Ext 107

<http://reach.services/services/communicationnpa/>

offers speech and language assessments and therapy to assistive technologies, coaching, and training, they offer a range of services to help children and adults communicate more effectively.

Speech and Language Development Center

8699 Holder Street, Buena Park
(714) 821-3620

www.sldc.net

The Speech and Language Development Center has speech therapists on staff who do AAC assessments for children and youth who have communication disabilities. The center offers a school of its own, but it also contracts with many local schools, families, and regional centers. The center provides services for children from six months of age up to individuals who are 21 years old.

Wings Speech and Language Services

12021 Jacaranda Ave., Suite #301, Hesperia
(760) 981-1069

www.wingsspeech.com

Speech pathologist can perform AAC assessments and PPO private health insurance and private pay in the High Desert location only at this time.

Villa Esperanza Services

2060 E Villa St, Pasadena
(626) 449-2919

<http://villaesperanzaservices.org>

Offers a variety of services including functional Communication Training; Intro to Augmentative and Alternative Communication; Visually Supports for Communication; iPads for Autism – Communicative, Educational, and Recreational Benefits of Mobile Technologies.

Other AAC Resources

Communication First

Washington, DC

<https://communicationfirst.org>

Email: info@communicationfirst.org

Communication First is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights of the more than 5 million children and adults in the United States who, due to disability or other condition, cannot rely on speech alone to be heard and understood. Our mission is to protect and advance the rights, autonomy, opportunity, and dignity of people with speech-related disabilities through public engagement, policy and practice reform, and systemic advocacy.

Growing Kids Therapy Center

Herndon, VA

Elizabeth Vosseler

703-464-0456

www.growingkidstherapycenter.com

Growing Kids Therapy Center is dedicated to teaching non-speaking, minimally speaking, and unreliably speaking individuals how to Spell to Communicate (S2C). We have a diverse interdisciplinary team to meet the needs of our clients with motor and sensory differences. We believe that communication and motor control lead to autonomy, independence and inclusion. We teach individuals with motor processing difficulties to coordinate their brain and body to communicate by spelling.

HALO - Helping Autism through Learning and Outreach

Soma Mukhopadhyay

Based in Austin, Texas

www.Halo-Soma.org

Email: information@halo-soma.org

(512) 465-9595

Clients learn to communicate by pointing to letters on a letter board or stencil. HALO is an organization that provides the services of Soma-Rapid Prompting Method, an academic program leading towards communication, the expression of reasoning and understanding, more reliable motor skills, and greater sensory tolerance.

HEED RPM (Lenaë Crandall, Certified RPM Provider)

Utah

Email: heedrpm@gmail.com

Phone: 801-850-7100

<http://www.heedrpm.com>

Teach individuals with Autism and related conditions who are "low-functioning" or non-verbal. I work to bring these individuals communication, education, and a future, typically using Rapid Prompting Method (RPM.) At HEED we have considerable experience teaching individuals that lack speech and have extreme sensory & motor struggles. Our job at HEED is to train your child's motor system to function in synchrony with his/her mind to enable them to communicate through written language using the Rapid Prompting Method. Video Library available on the website demonstrating the method.

International Association for Spelling as Communication (I-ASC)

<https://i-asc.org/>

Herndon, VA

Email: info@i-asc.org

703-454-0202

I-ASC supports all forms of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) with a focus on methods of spelling and typing. I-ASC is committed to ensuring access to effective communication that supports autonomy for non-speaking, minimally, and unreliably speaking individuals. Numerous informative videos available on the website

Kindred Communication

www.Gokindred.com

Provides online Spelling to Communicate (S2C) and Rapid Prompting Method (RPM). Coaches for families with Unreliably- and Non-Speaking Children with Autism

Reach Every Voice

www.reacheveryvoice.org

Maryland

Email: info@reacheveryvoice.org

Reach Every Voice teachers use strategies, including Rapid Prompting Method, to provide direct instruction with scaffolded supports to teach individuals who are non-speaking or have unreliable verbal abilities to express themselves with alternative communication.