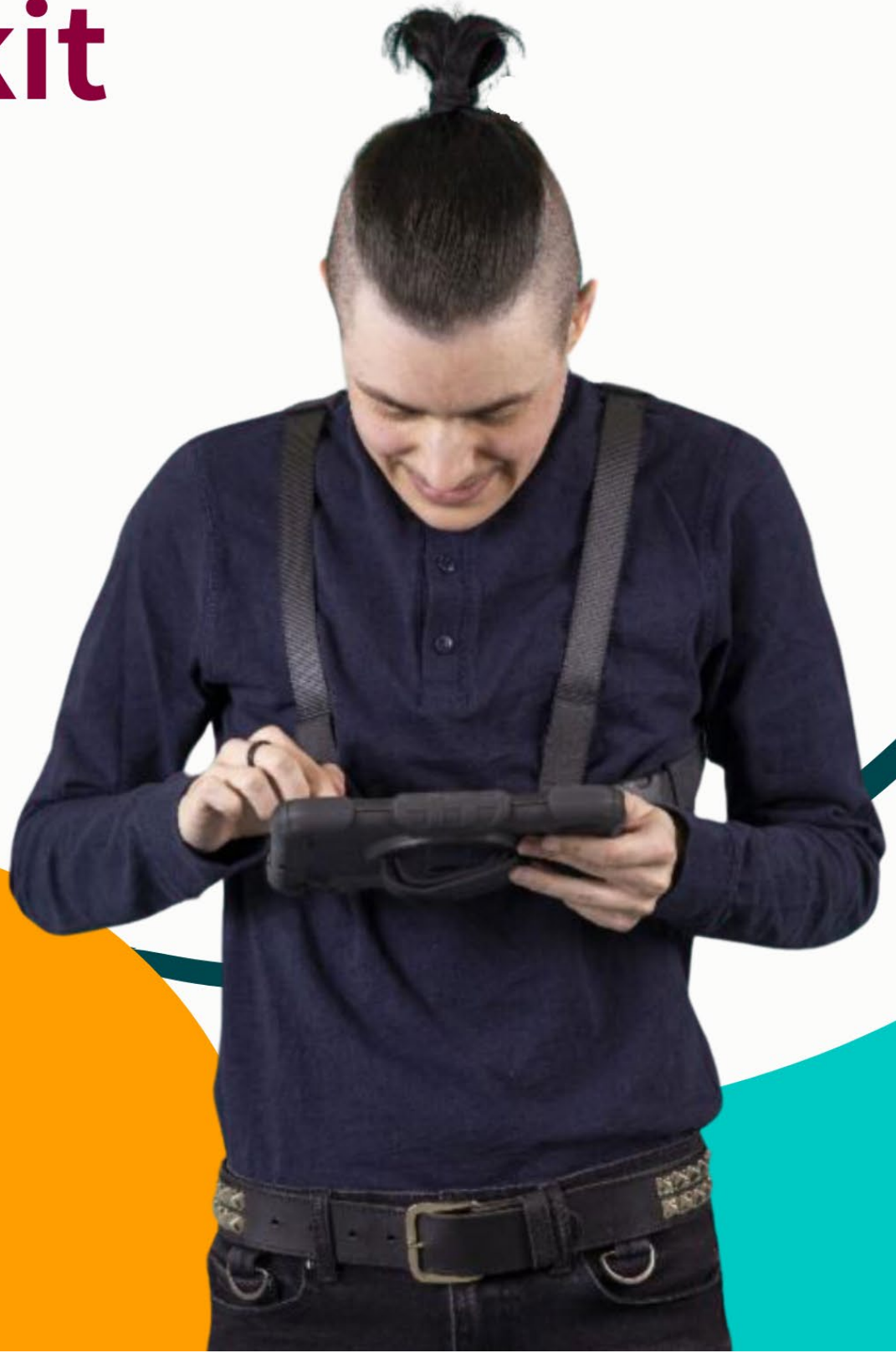




Autism Society
Inland Empire



AAC Resource Toolkit



**2024
Edition**

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 that 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. 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 learning and practicing this communication method. This Resource Guide was developed to help individuals and families find these supports.

A 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

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 that 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 program. J Intellect Disabil Res. 2016 May;60(5):464-77. doi: 10.1111/jir.12284. PMID: 27120989.

Table of Contents

What is AAC	4
Funding Pathways	5
Organizations Which May Fund.....	6
Socializing Groups for AAC Users.....	8
Southern CA Speech Pathologists Who Specialize in AAC	9
Speech Pathologists Who Specialize in AAC – Outside of Southern California.....	13

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 appropriate interventions for children with Autism, as they may be ineffective.

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

- Low-tech systems use non-electronic equipment for AAC strategies. These tools are often paper-based and contain books and charts. Low-tech AAC includes Communication Boards, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), and PIC. Electronic equipment allows users to create messages using pictures and letters. 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, and 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. Completing a communication or AAC assessment for the right match and preparing parents, teachers, therapists, etc., to be trained in the system is essential.

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, such as when an iPad allows your child to participate in a Free and Public Education (FAPE).</p>	<p>Insurance companies look for medical necessities, such as a condition like Apraxia, that limit your child's ability to speak. Insurance may cover the cost of medically necessary AAC devices with a prescription from a medical provider, 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 an AAC assessment and identify an 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 the student (to practice at home) - Update goals (for example, <i>By XXX, during structured language activities, X will use the speech-generating device for three 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, Flexible Spending, 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 that specialize in funding AAC devices, https://ieAutism.org/grants/

Organizations Which May Fund AAC Devices/APPS to Families

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

[Apraxia Kids](#)

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 quarterly funding assistance to families throughout the United States. These grants are designed to provide access to individuals and families affected by autism spectrum disorders.

[Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation-Ipad for Kids Program](#)

Through the iPad for Kids Program, families may apply each month to receive an iPad for their child with Autism. However, to support as many children as possible, only one iPad per child can be provided every three years.

[Easterseals Southern California- Voice Options Program](#)

The California Department of Rehab funds the Voice Options program through a partnership with the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP). Any California resident experiencing severe communication difficulty AND does not have access to high-tech communication is eligible to apply for this program.

[Lilly's Voice](#)

Assists people with Autism and who are non-verbal who have been rejected by other programs and cannot afford an AAC device without help.

[The National Autism Association Give a Voice Program](#)

The National Autism Association has a Give a Voice Program to provide devices to nonverbal and minimally verbal individuals. The program also offers access to certified practitioners in S2C (Spelling 2 Communicate) and RPM (Rapid Prompting Method) while continuing to provide an iPad AAC program.

[Northstar-Voice Options Program](#)

The Department of Rehabilitation's Voice Options program, funded through a California Public Utilities Commission grant, provides free AAC devices to Californians.

San Diego Speech Pathology-Voice Options Program

The Voice Options program aims to ensure complete and equal telephone communications access for all Californians with disabilities. Contact Mellisa Essenburg, M.S., CCC-SLP, to schedule a free demonstration of the available speech-generating applications and to begin the process of receiving an iPad loaded with the application that best suits your communication needs!

Small Steps in Speech

Helps individuals aged 3 to 22 with speech and/or language disorders take the steps needed to be better communicators. Families with a joint household income of up to \$125,000 are invited to apply for grants for speech therapy, therapeutic summer camps, or assistive devices or applications. They offer grants for an assistive technology device and/or iPad apps. (Not iPads)

Speech Bee- Voice Options Program

Speech Bee is a grantee for the California Voice Options program! Through the Voice Options grant, Speech Bee can provide Californians with disabilities impacting speech access to alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices. The Voice Options program is open to Californians of all ages and provides a free iPad and communication application of their choice.

Socializing Groups for AAC Users

[RPM, and Spelling Workshops and Sessions](#)

Palm Desert RPM Workshops with provider Becky Griffin, M. ED: RPM and Communication for Education trained provider Paloma French, MOT, OTL. Dates are coming throughout the year. AAC Get-Togethers: Join them for games, current events, and more with people who get it! Meet others who use AAC and have an opportunity to practice and enhance your skills.

[Autistically Inclined-Julie Sando](#)

Southern California

support@autisticallyinclined.com

Text: 413-329-6200

Offers Story Club and camps throughout the year. This is a book club experience for all spelling levels. Download a new story pack each month. Utilize awesome, freely available stories and audio. Share with friends on their self-paced discussion page. Connect for three one-hour online video meetings. Contribute to a self-paced, creative group story. Access a growing bank of story packs. Expand beyond a typical lesson in a fresh way.

Speech Pathologists Who Specialize in AAC – Southern California

[AAC Connections- Darlene Hanson, C.C.C.](#)

Whitter, CA

Darlene is a national expert on AAC. Can conduct AAC assessments, Speech and Language and AAC therapy, training, and communication partner therapy. Provides comprehensive services to those with limited communication who are non-speaking and use augmentative and alternate communication (AAC). Therapy can be provided at home or through telehealth. Speech therapy addresses speech development using oral motor skills and practice.

[Assistive Technology Exchange Center \(ATEC\), a program of Good Will of Orange County](#)

410 N. Fairview St, Santa Ana, CA 92703

atec@ocgoodwill.org

714-361.6200

Provides technological solutions to enable and empower individuals to increase their independence and functional capabilities at school, home, or workplace. As a comprehensive assistive technology program, they provide various services, including assessment and training, consultation and technical support, equipment installation, delivery, and repair. ATEC is also a Device Lending and Demonstration Center through Ability Tools that provides free, short-term AT device loans and reuse that help people live independently. To see what devices and equipment are available, contact ATEC or visit [National AT Directory \(NATADS\)](#)

[Augmentative Communication Therapies-Cindy Cottier, M.A., M.Ed., C.C.C., SLP](#)

625 Fair Oaks Ave., Suite 101, South Pasadena, CA 91030

626-427-1425

Cynthia A. Cottier is a speech-language pathologist working in augmentative and alternative communication since 1980. During a seven-year stint, she developed the AAC program for the Los Angeles Unified School District and went into private practice in 1992. She has extensive experience working directly with individuals aged 2 to 75+ years and of all disabilities. In addition, Ms. Cottier has a vast knowledge of various state-of-the-art augmentative and assistive systems, techniques, and strategies.

Autistically Inclined-Julie Sando

Southern California
support@autisticallyinclined.com
Text: 413-329-6200

Teaches Text-based Communication (ex: Letterboards, Keyboards, etc.) to non-speaking persons with Autism, their families, and providers. They offer tools for text-based communication for caregivers, parents, and professionals who support non or minimally speaking autistic people. Both direct service and online training are available.

Casa Colina- Augmentative & Alternative Communication Social Skills Group

Children's Services Center (Building 10), 255 East Bonita Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767

jhan@casacolina.org
909-596-7733, ext. 4200

The Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Social Skills Group at Casa Colina's Children's Services Center is a social skills program designed for children and adolescents who use an AAC device to communicate. Led by licensed speech-language pathologists, the AAC Group has a patient-to-clinician ratio of 2:1. Individuals with all types of AAC devices, at any ability level, are welcome to attend our group.

Communication Basics-Loren Chris M.S. CCC-SLP, ATP, CLC

2377 W Foothill Blvd., Suite 15 Upland, CA 91786

loren@communicationbasics.org
909-936-2377

Loren Chris is a licensed bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist and Assistive Technology Professional. She provides AAC assessment, programming, training, and therapy services to individuals and their families. She works with clients of all ages and skill levels to create robust communication systems to encourage independence in communication. Communication Basics provides superbills for insurance reimbursement and accepts private pay.

Ensemble Therapy

75100 Mediterranean Ave, Palm Desert, CA 92211

760-837-0033

Supports individuals with communication impairments through alternative methods like devices or sign language.

Grace Therapies

22672 Lambert Street Suite 611 & 612 Lake Forest, CA 92630 - 949-329-8161

222 N Mountain Ave Ste 109-A Upland, CA 91786 - 909-610-9151

The SLPs can assist in helping get funding for AAC systems needed through evaluation and provide treatment in learning how to use the system functionally. Free consultation call and guidance in the following steps towards receiving appropriate intervention. SLPs assist children ages 3 to 16.

Kindred Communication

19772 Macarthur Blvd. Suite 200 Irvine CA 92612

(949) 932-0549

They provide AAC assessments, Individualized and group therapy with AAC, Family training for AAC, and System and device programming. We have created different service models to meet your needs.

Lucid Speech and Language Center- Megan McCann, M.A., CCC-SLP

25102 Jefferson Avenue, Suite D, Murrieta CA 92562 - 951-461.1190

11810 Pierce Street, Suite 200, Riverside CA 92505 951-808.5850

27192 Newport Rd, Suite 1, Menifee CA 92584 951-566.4444

Their clinics have speech therapists who practice AAC. The clinic accepts most major forms of health insurance and credit card payment.

Nichols Speech and Language Services

41689 Enterprise Cir N STE 118 Temecula, CA 92590

admin@nicholsspeech.com

951-541-0615

Services include Speech, Language, and Communication evaluations and Speech Therapy (Apraxia, Articulation, Receptive and Expressive Delays, Pragmatic-Social Delays, social thinking, and Autism). If the individual is a current patient, they will also provide AAC assessment and therapy.

Oceanside Therapy Group

3355 Mission Ave, Suite 123, Oceanside, CA 92058

760-529-4975

SLPs work with children with various disorders, including speech and language delays, autism, cleft palate, deaf and hard of hearing, oral motor weakness, and swallowing issues. The speech therapy team at Oceanside Therapy Group can evaluate and provide services for Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Sensibilities Therapy Group

6800 Brockton Avenue Riverside, CA 92506 - 951.779.1966

9106 Pulsar Court, Suite I Corona, CA 92883 - 951.603.3119

They provide speech, language, and AAC services, including evaluations and device placement.

Speech Bee Speech Therapy, inc.

197 Woodland Parkway, Ste. 104 #1026 San Marcos, CA, 92069

22365 El Toro Road #1024 Lake Forest, CA, 92630

619-853-4345

Promotes a "total communication approach" that values all communication methods equally. Whether an individual uses speech, typing, gestures, signs, symbols, or a speech-generating device to communicate, all forms of communication are honored. A vital component of this approach is

communication partner training. They provide coaching and consultation to families, professionals, and schools.

[Resource for Education, Advocacy, Communication, and Housing \(REACH\)](#)

7200 Greenleaf Ave Suite 140 Whittier, CA 90602

505 South Myrtle Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016

562-946-0467 Ext 107

It offers various services, from speech and language assessments and therapy to assistive technologies, coaching, and training, to help children and adults communicate more effectively.

[Speech and Language Development Center](#)

8699 Holder Street Buena Park, CA 90620 - 951-383-8505

43385 Business Park Dr, #140 Temecula, CA 92590 - 714-821-3620

Has speech therapists who perform AAC assessments for children and youth with communication disabilities. Their team is focused on finding the right communication tools for each child, including picture symbols, sign language, and communication devices.

[Wings Speech and Language Services](#)

12021 Jacaranda Ave., Suite #301, Hesperia CA

760-981-1069

Speech pathologists can perform AAC assessments. It accepts PPO private health insurance and private pay only at the High Desert location.

[Villa Esperanza Services](#)

2116 E Villa St, Pasadena CA

626-449-2919

It offers various services, including functional Communication Training, Introduction to Augmented and Alternative Communication, visual Communication support, and iPads for Autism: Communicative, Educational, and Recreational Benefits of Mobile Technologies.

Speech Pathologists Who Specialize in AAC – Outside of Southern California

[Growing Kids Therapy Center](#)

Based in Virginia and offers virtual services.

703-464-0456

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

[HALO - Helping Autism through Learning and Outreach](#)

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 the Soma-Rapid Prompting Method, an academic program that promotes communication, the expression of reasoning and understanding, more reliable motor skills, and greater sensory tolerance.

[HEED RPM-Lenae Crandall, Certified RPM Provider](#)

Based in Utah and offers Services Via Email/Video

heedrpm@gmail.com

Phone: 801-850-7100

She teaches individuals with Autism and related conditions who are non-speaking. She works to bring these individuals communication, education, and a future, typically using the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM). The goal at HEED is to train your child's motor system to function in synchrony with their mind to enable them to communicate through written language using the Rapid Prompting Method. A video library demonstrating the method is available on the website.

[International Association for Spelling as Communication](#)

The International Association for Spelling as Communication, aka I-ASC, is a global organization of individuals from the nonspeaking and neurodivergent community. It seeks to make spelling and relevant support accessible to everyone who cannot use speech as a reliable means of communication. The organization is committed to setting the standard of best practices to ensure communicative agency and autonomy for all non-speakers.

Reach Every Voice

Based in Maryland and offers online student classes

info@reacheveryvoice.org

Reach Every Voice teachers use strategies, including the Rapid Prompting Method, to provide direct instruction with scaffolded support and teach non-speaking individuals with unreliable verbal abilities to express themselves with alternative communication.

Spellers-San Diego

4055 Oceanside Blvd Suite B Oceanside CA 92056

sandiego@spellers.com

760-536-3896

A robust learning center where non-speakers come to learn the Spellers Method and participate in group lessons and social events. They provide personalized coaching and support to help non-speakers and their families navigate the journey of learning this powerful communication method.