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THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PREPARING FOR A LOAN

AAC is about participation, independence and building relationships - vocabulary is the tool that makes this possible. The items in this handout are designed to help you collect information in order to make decisions about choosing vocabulary when setting up a speech-generating device for trial.

1. Vocabulary selection should aim at augmenting ("adding to") the individual's socially acceptable modes of communication (allow him/her to say more things and for more reasons), and provide an alternative for those methods which are socially unacceptable (i.e., resorting to challenging behaviors). When selecting initial vocabulary, we want to concentrate on concepts the individual cannot already convey in another way (replacing a gesture that is already working well will likely increase frustration, potentially causing negative associations with using an SGD).

Summarize all methods (e.g., vocalizations; facial expressions; gestures such as pointing, reaching, showing, gaze shifting; direct physical manipulation of a person or object such as taking a person's hand and pushing it towards a desired item; sign language; challenging behaviors; use of objects, photographs; pic symbols; words) the individual is using to communicate the following:

- Get attention _____
- Initiate an interaction _____
- Request items, activities (e.g., preferred foods, activities) _____

- Request help _____
- Request more _____
- Indicate all done _____
- Protest(don't want) _____
- Greet _____
- Express a feeling _____

- Make a choice _____
- Answer yes/no _____
- Comment (e.g., drawing another person's attention to something in the environment; express likes/dislikes) _____

- Communicate about items/events not in the immediate environment/ not obvious or known to the other person (e.g., communicating about past or upcoming activities)

2. The main goal is to have the individual discover how a device can **empower him/her through communication**. To do this, we need to give him/her a **reason** to communicate, and this is all about **motivators**.

List all of the individual's **likes**, reinforcing and "die-for" items, activities and/or environments which will motivate him/her to communicate (e.g., movement activities; being around peers; going to the gym; food items; listening to music; certain toys/games/books/videos; sensory activities).

Note: Sometimes motivators might not be obvious or may be unusual. Think about situations when the individual is happiest.

List all of the individual's definite **dislikes** - he/she needs to be able to communicate this too. Without such messages, most people will quickly learn to act out "don't want/like" through challenging behaviors:

4. List the individual's typical daily activities, and categorize them into those that are preferred, tolerated and less preferred.

Preferred	Tolerated	Less Preferred

Pick 2 activities that the individual is involved with **several times a week** (preferred or at least tolerated) where there are multiple opportunities for interaction including choice-making, commenting, etc. (e.g., arts and crafts; shared reading; physiotherapy; calendar time). Think about what vocabulary the individual needs to participate more fully in the activity (e.g., shared reading - "Let's read"; "I like that book"; "I wonder what's going to happen"; "Time to turn the page"; "That's funny!", etc).

1) **Activity/Messages needed:**

2) **Activity/Messages needed:**

****Note:** Once the individual has learned the communicative power a device can offer him/her, the device can then often become the motivator to participate and interact in less preferred activities.

5. List activities the individual does outside of school (evenings; week-ends).

6. List some powerful messages you think the individual would love to be able to readily communicate (e.g., "I'm all done talking; I need a break; That's not what I'm saying; Just leave me alone; Hey, I have something to say about that; Wait a minute. You're going too fast).

7. Think about what the individual's peers are saying/ how are they saying it? (e.g., Hello, good morning vs. Hey, what's up?). List a few of the "expressions" (both positive and negative) kids of the same age are using (e.g., "That's sweet!"; "Bummer!").

8. Comment on the individual's literacy skills/potential for literacy (exposure to and interest in written language; sight words, etc).

**** Remember that the long term goal is always independent communication (the ability to communicate anything on any topic to anyone). For this reason, we need to provide as much literacy exposure and training as possible. Conversational vocabulary to create novel utterances requires only third grade literacy skills!**

9. List any routines, social stories or self-cueing strategies that you are currently working on to help the individual become more independent. (e.g., toileting routine; getting ready for home routine; classroom "rules"; dressing steps; learning steps to carry out a new "job").
