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Roles and Responsibilities of Speech- Language Pathologists With Respect to Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Position Statement

*ASHA Special Interest Division 12, Augmentative and Alternative Communication
(AAC)*

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About This Document

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Special Interest Division 12: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) prepared this position statement. Members of the Working Group for Division 12 included Stephen Calculator (chair, document revisions committee), Amy Finch, Susan McCloskey, Ralf Schlosser, and Cassie Sementelli. Tracy Kovach and Rose Sevcik, members of the Working Group, provided input to an earlier draft of this document. Alex Johnson, 2002–2005 vice president for professional practices in speech-language pathology, and Celia Hooper, 2003–2005 served as monitoring vice presidents. Roseanne Clausen and Michele Ferketic, ex officio members of the committee, provided additional support.

Position Statement

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to an area of research, clinical, and educational practice. AAC involves attempts to study and when necessary compensate for temporary or permanent impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions of individuals with severe disorders of speech-language production and/or comprehension, including spoken and written modes of communication.

It is the position of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) that communication is the essence of human life and that all people have the right to communicate to the fullest extent possible. No individuals should be denied this right, irrespective of the type and/or severity of communication, linguistic, social, cognitive, motor, sensory, perceptual, and/or other disability(ies) they may present.

Provision of AAC services is within the scope of practice of speech-language pathologists (ASHA, 2001). The speech-language pathologist (SLP) who is practicing within the area of AAC shall:

- Recognize and hold paramount the needs and interests of individuals who may benefit from AAC and assist them to communicate in ways they desire.
- Implement a multimodal approach to enhance effective communication that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills (ASHA, 2002) that are necessary to provide quality professional services.
- Integrate perspectives, knowledge and skills of team members, especially those individuals who have AAC needs, their families, and significant others in developing functional and meaningful goals and objectives.
- Assess, intervene, and evaluate progress and outcomes associated with AAC interventions using principles of evidence-based practice.
- Facilitate individuals' uses of AAC to promote and maintain their quality of life.
- Advocate with and for individuals who can or already do benefit from AAC, their families, and significant others to address communication needs and ensuring rights to full communication access.

References

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