



October 22, 2026

Sylvia Fogel, MD
Chair, Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
6001 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: 2025-2026 IACC Summary of Advances

Dear Dr. Fogel:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), we write to express our thoughts on the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) Summary of Advances.¹

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 247,000 members, certificate holders, and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists (SLPs); speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology assistants; and students.

Our members serve millions of children and adults with communication disorders—including those with a diagnosis of autism—across our nation's schools, hospitals, clinics, and other settings. Our members also serve a substantial number of children with disabilities who receive services under various programs ranging from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to Medicaid and Medicare.

Audiologists specialize in preventing, assessing, and treating hearing and balance disorders. SLPs identify, assess, and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive communication disorders. The services ASHA members provide are medically necessary, evidence-based, and essential to health and independence across the lifespan.²

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the IACC's statutorily mandated report on the most consequential autism research published since 2025. We understand that respondents may recommend up to five studies published on or after January 1, 2025. The following list represents the five studies ASHA is suggesting.

Five Suggested Studies

1. Systematic Review of Authorship in Rapid Prompting Method, Spelling to Communicate, and Variants: Outcomes, Significance and Clinical Implications³

This systematic review was unable to find any study that empirically established whether messages produced using Rapid Prompting Method (RPM), Spelling to Communicate (S2C), Spellers Method, and related intervention techniques associated with facilitated communication (FM) were authored by the facilitated person or the facilitator. As such, there is currently no research evidence establishing facilitator-dependent

communication techniques as valid forms of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

Eligible studies had to involve individuals with communication disabilities (e.g., minimally- or non-speaking individuals, autistic individuals, people with developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome) and an a priori manipulation of the information available to the facilitator versus the person being facilitated in order to determine the source of the generated messages.

This research gap indicates a need for studies that formally investigate authorship of messages generated via these RPM, S2C, Spellers Method, FM, and other facilitator-dependent methods. The authors of this review also identified a number of potential clinical implications for these findings, which can be found on pages six through nine of this open access article. ⁴

2. Augmentative and Alternative Communication Assessment for Children on the Autism Spectrum: Protocol Development and Content Validation⁵

This study directly supports structured, comprehensive AAC assessment by clinicians with AAC/autism expertise.

3. A Systematic review of AAC interventions using speech generating devices for autistic preschoolers⁶

This study supports using evidence-based AAC intervention, explicit teaching, and multicomponent implementation rather than merely supplying a device.

4. Evaluation of a hearing assessment protocol for children with communication or autism concerns⁷

This study supports incorporating tailored audiologic assessment into autism and communication evaluation pathways.

5. Identifying autism in children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing: A systematic review of the literature⁸

This study supports the need to include hearing expertise in autism evaluation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. ASHA welcomes the opportunity to serve as a resource to the IACC and would be pleased to provide additional research, clinical, or policy information on any of the topics addressed in this letter. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact:

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American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
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Submitted on behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

¹ National Institutes of Health. (2026). 2025-2026 IACC Summary of Advances. *Federal Register*. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/10/13/2026-20825/2025-2026-iacc-summary-of-advances>

² Monz, B. U., Houghton, R., Law, K., & Loss, G. (2019). Treatment patterns in children with autism in the United States. *Autism Research*. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6519302/>

³ Schlosser, R. W., Shane, H., Bryant, L., Beals, K., Todd, J., Lang, R., Skinner, S., & Hemsley, B. Systematic Review of Authorship in Rapid Prompting Method, Spelling to Communicate, and Variants: Outcomes, Significance and Clinical Implications. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-026-00569-7>

⁴ American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). (n.d.). *Summary of the Systematic Review*. <https://apps.asha.org/EvidenceMaps/Articles/ArticleSummary/6124b245-da94-f111-9a7c-000d3a149d5a>

⁵ Lund, S. K., Quach, W., Weissling, K., & McKelvey, M. (2025). Augmentative and Alternative Communication Assessment for Children on the Autism Spectrum: Protocol Development and Content Validation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*. https://doi.org/10.1044/2024_LSHSS-23-00127

⁶ Therrien, M. C. S., Whalon, K., Nunes, D., Marti, P., & Sellers, A. (2025). A Systematic review of AAC interventions using speech generating devices for autistic preschoolers. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07434618.2025.2479768>

⁷ Confer, E. J., Fosnight, A. M., Wheeler, L. R., & Bonino, A. Y. (2026). Evaluation of a hearing assessment protocol for children with communication or autism concerns. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2026.1833679>

⁸ Corr, A., & Birch, S. (2025). Identifying autism in children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing: a systematic review of the literature. *Educational Psychology in Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2025.2593236>