Inclusion of AAC Users: Best Practices

What is AAC?

AAC stands for **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**. AAC helps people who don't speak with their mouth to communicate with words. AAC is different from out-loud speech.

Examples

- An example would be an iPad that makes out-loud speech when someone pushes a picture or icon.

- Another example would be a computer program that makes out-loud speech from someone's typed text.

- Another example would be a letter board. The AAC user would point at letters to spell out words.

General Guidelines

- **Ask the AAC user what works best for them**, and what accommodations they need. Then do that.

- **Talk directly to the AAC user**, and not to their support person if they have one. If you are in a group, make sure everyone in the group talks directly to the AAC user.

- **AAC takes longer than speech**. Give time for the AAC user to answer with no interruptions.

- **If the AAC is hard to hear or understand for any reason, ask them to repeat it**. It is important to make sure you can understand and respond to their comments, just like anyone else. Everyone's contribution is important.

At presentations (like conferences)

- If the AAC user is in the audience and has a comment, they will need a microphone. Ask the AAC user's opinion. They might want to hold the microphone, or you to hold the microphone, or put the microphone on the table next to the device speaker.

- If the AAC user is presenting at the conference, the device needs to be connected to audio equipment.

During group meetings
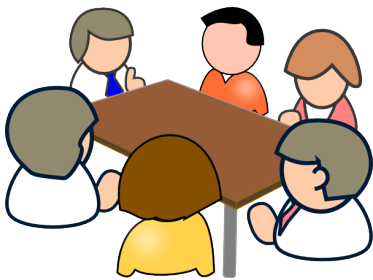
- **Make sure the AAC users are included** by asking them questions. Then, make sure no one interrupts the AAC user while they respond.

- **Ask the AAC user if they want extra time specifically built into the meeting**, especially for when you are asking for people's opinions.

  - For example, the facilitator could go around the group calling on people, and let the AAC user know that they will be called on third or fourth to give them time to get their message ready.

  - The facilitator could also go around the group in a circle and ask everyone to say something, with the AAC user closer to the end. That way, the AAC user has more time to prepare.

- **A written plan of meeting topics is also helpful to give in advance**, so the AAC user has time to prepare. Preparation could include adding words to the AAC device.

During phone conferences

- Ask the AAC user how to best include them.

- A written conference meeting agenda before the meeting is useful for the AAC user.

Some people might:

- Use their device near the phone speaker.

- Text things to someone on the call to read.

- Have someone else with them to read their input out loud.