

DTA Schools

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Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessment

Referral Process:

1. **IEP Team meets** and determines the need for additional information regarding the student's communication needs. This may be accomplished through the use of the SETT Process or a more informal discussion of the IEP team members, including the student's family or guardian. The guidelines on this decision are determined on a district by district basis by the Department of Special Education.
2. **Referral** is submitted to the Special Education Coordinator or Director of Special Education (differs by school district, please see your local district policy for clarification).
3. **Referral is assigned to DTA Schools** by the district defined administrator.
4. DTA School Team reviews documentation and sets up an **initial file system** for the student to store information and documents. Needed documents include the current **IEP**, most recent **Eligibility** and **Vision and Hearing Screening**.

Assessment Process:

1. **Team Input:** DTA School Team members begin process of interviewing relevant staff, conducting brief observations and sending out surveys to gain input from relevant staff and family members. At times we may request follow up teleconferences and video examples of student interactions.
2. **Current Speech, Language and Communication Skills** are determined through records reviews, interviews and survey. If recent testing is not available, DTA School Team or local SLPs and other relevant staff will conduct direct assessment, observation, language and communication sampling or interviews to determine current skills. If current AAC systems are in place, student, environment and task factors will be considered to determine if a full AAC assessment is needed, or whether the current system is sufficient or may need updating and modifications.
3. **AAC Skills Assessment** will be conducted including trials with appropriate equipment including both electronic devices, paper based and partner aided systems. This may be a single assessment visit or may include multiple visits and on-going trials with potential AAC solutions.

Findings Review:

1. DTA Team develops a **Preliminary AAC Assessment Report** which includes all relevant considerations, results of the trials and considerations of multiple AAC solutions, potential solutions for the IEP team to consider. This does not recommend a specific system, but is rather a document which guides the IEP team discussion in deciding on AAC solutions they wish to pursue.
2. **IEP Team Meets, including family or guardian**, to discuss the finding of the AAC Assessment, and to determine the AAC solutions the team would like to pursue. During this meeting the IEP team needs to document that the family/guardian understands they are not required to submit insurance/Medicaid information for the purpose of funding the AAC solutions to maintain the student's rights to FAPE. If however, the family wishes to pursue private funding and ownership of AAC equipment, the DTA Schools Team can assist with the entire funding process.
3. The **IEP Team informs DTA Schools of the outcome of the meeting** and the IEP team decision regarding desired AAC solutions.

Funding Process:

1. If the IEP team and family wishes to pursue private funding of a **speech generating device**, DTA Schools will write a formal **Speech Generating Device Evaluation Report** (SGD Report) include all of the information required by most insurance, Medicaid and Medicare funding.
2. **The student will need to be seen by their family physician**, have the visit notes detailing the discussion of the need for an AAC system, acquire a prescription for the equipment and have a signed letter of medical needs. This process will be explained in a detailed letter from DTA Schools to the IEP team.
3. The family will need to give **signed consent** for the SGD manufacturer to apply on their behalf to their funding source (i.e. insurance or Medicaid) and to agree that they will pay for any equipment they receive and accept if it is not covered by their insurance. Family will not ever be asked to pay for equipment that they do not wish to accept once an insurance determination is made.
4. The **SGD Manufacturer will apply to insurance/Medicaid** to cover the cost of the equipment.
5. If Medicaid/Insurance agrees to cover the entire cost of the equipment, **the equipment will be shipped to Dynamic Therapy Associates, Inc. for customization** unless otherwise requested by the IEP team.
6. **If insurance/Medicaid does not cover the entire cost**, the SGD manufacturer will contact the family to discuss payment options. DTA Schools can also assist in seeking coverage from other agencies in the state, although coverage is not guaranteed.

Customization of AAC Solutions:

Students begin communicating about the people, places and things that interest them the most. As our primary goal is to develop spontaneous, autonomous communication, it is imperative that the student see "their" words on their AAC solutions! With your help, we will make sure these words are there! Here's the process:

1. An emailed form or survey will be sent to the IEP team and family requesting specific people, places and items of interests to the student so that these can be included in the AAC solutions.
2. We will request photos of important people in the student's lives. These can be attached to the survey form, emailed or shared online with our team.
3. Once we receive the information, we will begin the process of customizing the AAC solutions to match the results of the AAC Assessment.

Delivery of AAC Solutions:

A member of the DTA Schools team will **deliver the AAC solutions to the classroom**. Parents and teachers may be invited to learn the basic operation of the solution and how to locate pertinent messages and words. This is a **technical session only and will not cover implementation training**. It is imperative that the team and family receive implementation training in order for the AAC solutions to be impactful for the student. Each district handles this training in different ways. These are possible ways the team and family can receive training:

- AAC Tips Flyers
- Training by an AAC Expert from DTA Schools
- Training by the local AAC Specialist from the school district
- Free webinars provided on the DTAschools.com website
- Training consultation provided by the SGD manufacturer's representatives
- Free webinars and local trainings provided by the SGD manufacturers

Implementation Planning

The final step to the AAC assessment is to develop a plan of action describing the system, documenting important details about the system and manufacturer, considering the specifics of any customization, planning the communication goals, and determining the strategies to make sure it works.

If at any point, the AAC system no longer works for the student, we circle back around to the initial assessment process!

Final Thoughts

There is so much more to the process of ensuring that the new AAC solutions work for your students! Please understand that this is an on-going process, from the initial referral, to the delivery of equipment to the on-going support and training. It is a process that will be revisited throughout the lifetime of a student needing AAC supports. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or clarifications at any time. We are excited to join you on this journey!