



AAC Peer Support Project

Final Report
Plain Language Summary

May 2025

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What is This Project?

The goal of the project was to come up with a list of ways to increase peer support for people who use or need AAC. AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Peer support means activities where people help each other in a lot of different ways. AAC peer support means that AAC users help each other in many activities.

The AAC Peer Support Project ran from February 2024 to March 2025. This report describes what we learned. We had two questions in this project:

- What peer supports do AAC users have right now?
- Can we list ways to increase peer support for AAC users? When we say “increase,” we mean making peer support better, and making sure more people can get peer support.

To answer those questions, we did these things:

- Ran a survey of AAC users and others about peer support programs.
- Learned about different peer support models and what results they had. A model is an example or a design that people can learn from.
- Read research studies that have already been done on AAC Peer Support.
- Figured out what makes it easier to have peer support happen and what makes it harder. We paid special attention to marginalized communities. Marginalized communities are groups that often don't have fair treatment in society.
- Studied different peer support activities.
- Agreed on ideas and recommendations to increase AAC Peer Support.
- Created this final report with recommendations for a national plan.

The project was led by people from the Oregon Health & Science University's (OHSU) University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and CommunicationFIRST through a contract with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD). Funding for the project came from the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

Who Are We?

The AAC Peer Support Project created a group called the Consortium. This group had about 60 people from more than 30 organizations. The list is in Appendix A on page 14. The group worked together on the project. There was a steering committee of three AAC users. They worked with input from 24 AAC users in the Consortium. Everyone on

the Consortium agreed on what we did. We paid extra attention to what AAC users thought. People in the group were:

- AAC users
- People who work with AAC users
- People who do research
- Family members
- Teachers
- Disability rights advocates
- Companies that make AAC
- Other experts

Understanding AAC Peer Support

What is AAC?

AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. AAC helps people communicate. AAC is any way to communicate other than talking. This can be writing, typing into a machine that talks, hand and body movements, and more. People use AAC in different ways and often use more than one type of AAC.

Who Uses AAC?

Anyone who can't talk needs AAC. People of all ages and abilities can use AAC. For more details about AAC, visit the [CommunicationFIRST](#) website.

What Kinds of AAC Do People Use?

We asked 135 AAC users across the U.S. what kinds of AAC they use. This is the largest survey to ask this question. Some AAC uses technology like computers. Some AAC uses your body, like smiling or waving. Most people said they use both kinds of AAC to communicate. Almost all people use more than one way to communicate.

What is Peer Support?

Peers are people who are a lot alike or have something in common. Peer support is not like an instructor teaching a student. Peer support is an activity where peers help each other. Peer support can happen in a lot of different ways. Peer support helps disabled people build skills and feel good about themselves. Other people might give help so that peers can support each other. For example, a staff person might set up a Zoom meeting on a computer so the peers can meet online. Or a parent might support someone to communicate while on an outing with peers.

This is what we believe about peer support:

- **Peers Help Each Other:** Everyone gives and gets support.

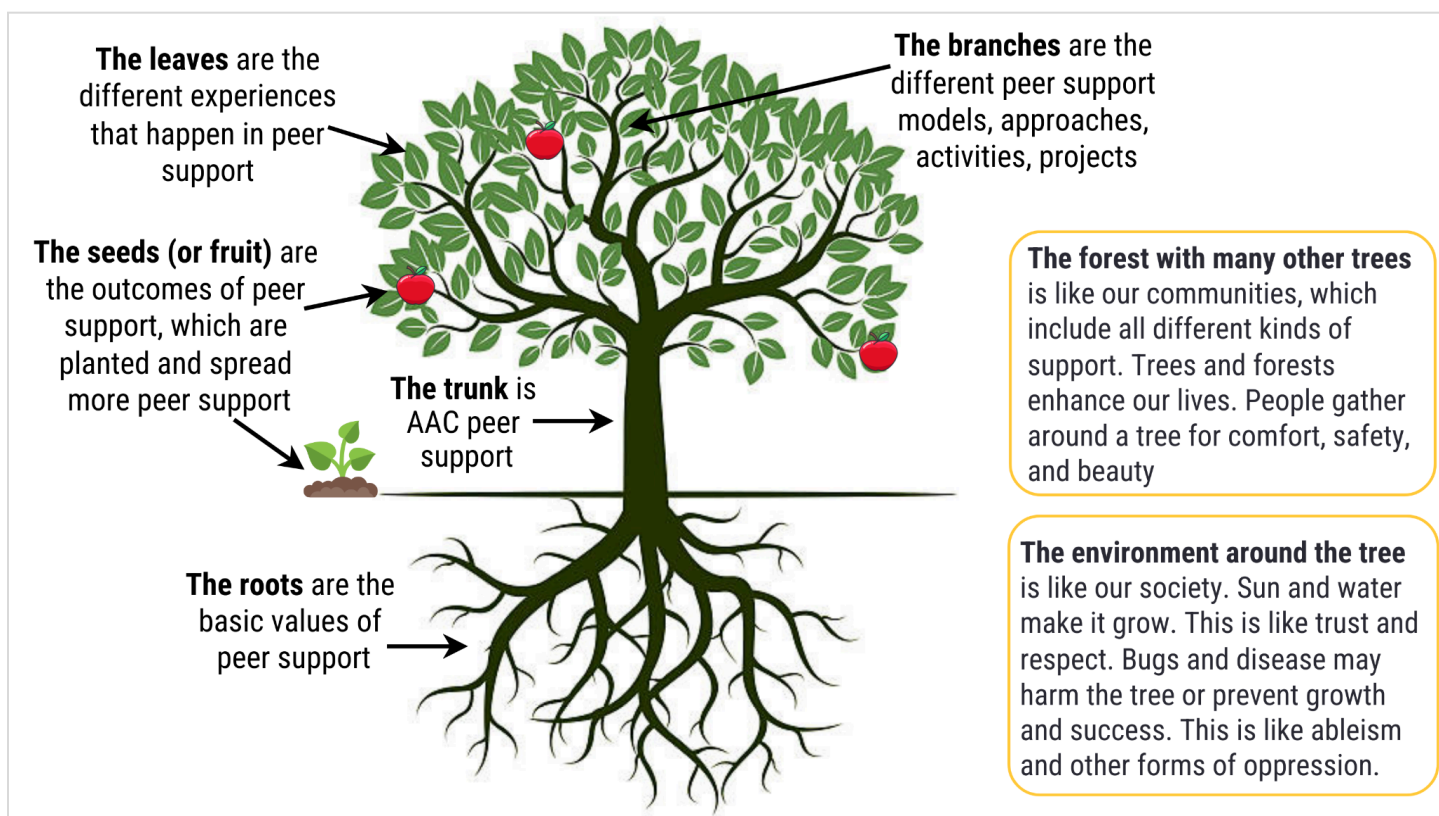
- **We Feel Valued:** It's about being seen, heard, and appreciated.
- **We Are in Different Groups:** Everyone belongs to various peer groups.
- **It is Flexible:** Peer support can happen one time or more than once.
- **It's About What Works for the Peers:** It can focus on one thing or many things. It should be based on what people want and what they can do.
- **It Challenges Oppression:** Peer support fights against unfair treatment.
- **It Builds Community:** It creates a sense of belonging and sharing.
- **It Fosters Pride:** It helps people feel proud and strong.

What is AAC Peer Support?

AAC Peer Support is an activity where AAC users feel comfortable sharing their ideas and things that bother them. Important things about AAC Peer Support include:

- **Connection:** Building friendships and belonging.
- **Empowerment:** Encouraging independence and supporting each other.
- **Shared Experiences:** Learning from each other.
- **Flexibility:** Having different kinds of activities that peers decide on.
- **Trust and Respect:** It is important for people to feel safe with each other.

Consortium members described AAC Peer Support with a picture of a tree.



Consortium members described AAC Peer Support using a Word Cloud.

What words come to mind when you think of peer support?

452 responses



Things That Help Make AAC Peer Support Happen

Many people who need AAC don't have it. Peer support can help with this. We figured out some ways to help make AAC Peer Support happen:

- **Minimize Barriers:** Plan ahead to make it easier for people to participate. Change your plans if needed. Prioritize AAC users' point of view. Prioritizing means putting AAC users first, and treating them like experts.
- **Meeting Format:** Virtual meetings are helpful for lots of people but not all. Offer both in person and online options but keep a consistent schedule.
- **Spread the Word:** Everyone needs to know about AAC Peer Support. AAC Peer Support can only help AAC users who know about it.
- **Individual Support:** People with disabilities need help to access peer support.

AAC users told us what helps make AAC Peer Support happen:

- *“Treating AAC users as AAC experts has been key.”*
- *“I feel that we are all on equal footing... all are valid and should be respected.”*

- *“I felt like everyone had time to be heard and talk.”*
- *“Helping people relax in peer support meetings is important. Using AAC is so much work and you constantly feel like you cannot keep up.”*
- *“Laughter is very underrated.”*

Consortium members talked about what makes it hard to get AAC Peer Support. These are shown in a video on our webpage. Here is the link: bit.ly/AAC_PeerSupportProject

Research on AAC Peer Support

What did we do, and why?: We read research about AAC Peer Support to understand it better. We had these goals:

1. Describe peer support models for AAC users.
2. Understand the people involved and what they did.
3. Describe what people get out of peer support.
4. Find out what research needs to be done next.

How did we do this?: We followed a review process called PRISMA. PRISMA is a tool that helps researchers to make systematic reviews. In a systematic review, researchers look at a lot of research that has already been done, put it together, and explain what it means. We searched for research studies about AAC Peer Support and found 1,309 articles. We read 15 studies that had the exact information we wanted to know about. Here is what we learned.

Goal 1: Describe peer support models for AAC users.

- **Activities:** An activity is something you do. There are studies on lots of kinds of peer support activities. Here are examples:
 - Conversations
 - Learning
 - Helping each other with problems
 - Counseling
 - Role-playing
 - Making goals
 - Networking
- **Formats:** A format is the way an activity is set up. Peer support can happen online, in person, or both. Peer support meetings can happen in different ways:
 - Synchronously, which means people get together at the same time

- Asynchronously, which means people connect on their own schedule, like in an email
- A mix of both
- **Contexts:** A context is the setting, or place, where an activity happens. Peer support happens in lots of different places. It can be outings and fun activities, therapy, or camps. Group sizes can be small or big.

Goal 2: Describe who is involved and what their roles are.

- **Participants:** The studies were about peers with different disabilities.
- **Age:** There were studies about peers in different age groups, but most of the studies were about adults.
- **Roles:**
 - Most programs were led by a professional or teacher
 - Some programs were led by peers
 - Not very many programs were led by both professionals and peers

AAC users were sometimes involved in the programs:

- Deciding how the programs should be
- Making the programs work
- Studying the programs

Goal 3: Describe what people get out of peer support.

- Some studies asked if people felt more connected to other people.
- Some studies tested whether the peers could communicate better.

Goal 4: Find out what research still needs to be done.

There was some information missing in the research we read. Researchers should include these things in the future:

- What people get out of peer support
- How many meetings people had
- How long the meetings were
- Group sizes
- Individual information about the peers
- What skills people got
- Children and young people

AAC Peer Support Models Survey

We asked 135 AAC users across the U.S. about their experiences with peer support. It was the largest survey of AAC users in the U.S. when we did it. This is what we found:

- More than half of AAC users got peer support while learning AAC.
- Almost everyone who got AAC Peer Support wanted more.
- A lot of people who didn't get AAC Peer Support wanted it. Some people weren't sure.

We learned from the answers to the survey. People said AAC Peer Support is helpful in these ways:

- **Mentoring Support:** AAC Peer Support can help to improve self-advocacy skills.
- **Validation:** AAC Peer Support can help AAC users feel like they are not alone. It can show AAC users that they are part of a community.
- **Guidance:** AAC Peer Support can help AAC users get better at communicating using their AAC systems.
- **Advocacy:** AAC Peer Support can bring AAC users together to speak up for the AAC community.

A few people also said they didn't need AAC Peer Support.

Most people who responded to the survey want peer support. People think peer support could help them with self-advocacy. They think peer support could improve AAC skills. AAC Peer Support programs should focus on these goals.

Evaluating AAC Peer Support

We know AAC users want peer support. How will we know if peer support is helping them? We have to evaluate AAC Peer Support. When we evaluate something, we study it. We decide what it is doing right, and what it is doing wrong. We compare its goals (what we want it to do) with its outcomes (what it is really doing). When something is made to help people, evaluation is how we make sure that it is really helping people.

To evaluate AAC Peer Support, we have to understand what AAC users think is important. Here is what they said:

1. **It's Not Just About Communication.** The goal of AAC Peer Support isn't just to improve communication. People should set their own goals, like spending time with other people, learning from other AAC users, and other things that are important to them.

2. **Participation and Engagement Are Most Important.** We can tell that AAC Peer Support is working when people get involved in it. We can tell AAC Peer Support is working if people stay involved or are excited about it.
3. **Feeling Valued (the "I Matter" Factor).** It is very important to feel like you matter. Another way to say this is "I belong." It means feeling heard and respected.

Self-Assessment

AAC users should decide whether peer support activities help them or not. We can ask people if AAC Peer Support helped them meet their goals. We can ask them if AAC Peer Support made them feel better. When we ask questions like this, it is called a self-assessment. Self-assessments are an important part of evaluations.

Self-assessments help us understand the ways that peer support is helping, and how it could be better.

Here are some ideas of questions we could ask when we do self-assessments:

- What did you hope to get from this peer support activity?
- What were your goals for joining this peer support activity?
- Did this peer support activity help you meet your goals?
- Was this peer support activity what you wanted? Why or why not?
- Can you participate in peer support as much as you want?

Everything needs to be accessible to AAC users. Accessibility is different for each person. We can't assume that something is accessible, just because we think it should be. We should ask AAC users what keeps them from participating as much as they want to.

What is Successful AAC Peer Support?

The AAC users in the Consortium told us what it's like when peer support is successful. This is what they said:

- *"All people involved in the peer support gathering, model, or group feels valued, validated, and everybody gets something that they can utilize outside of the peer support."*
- *"The peers get what THEY want out of it whether or not that goal is shared by (or even comprehensible to) the professionals around them."*

- *“An AAC Peer Support experience is successful when a person who uses AAC can acquire guidance, community acceptance, or camaraderie from other people who use AAC.”*
- *“I feel a greater sense of engagement, empowerment, hopefulness, and belonging than how I felt before the peer support experience.”*
- *“When I feel empowered I can take on difficult tasks. When I feel engaged I do not feel isolated or lonely. Using AAC is challenging at times but meeting with AAC peers we are all on the same page, or dynamic display, whatever the case may be.”*
- *“I ask a Direct Support Person (DSP) to help me fix an issue I'm having with my communication device, and they follow my instructions that I had programmed on my device. ...I glean new communication techniques from fellow AAC users while attending meetings and AAC Socials. ... a group meets at a set time and day routinely. ... I look forward to an "AAC Social." ... I successfully communicate to a stranger using my communication device. ... I make students laugh while I'm speaking to their class. ...I get my doctor to understand what I need.”*

Funding for AAC Peer Support

There are ways to pay for AAC Peer Support activities. Some sources of funding include:

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- U.S. Department of Education (ED)
- Administration on Children and Families (ACF)
- Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- State Councils on Developmental Disabilities
- Private foundations and non-profit organizations

People should keep looking for money to pay for AAC Peer Support.

Resources and Information

Consortium members made a list of 59 peer support groups. The list is in Appendix B on page 16.

Key Words for AAC Users

The words we use are important because it affects how we think. Using the right words to describe people is respectful. The Consortium talked about the words listed below. They preferred the words that are in bold.

- **AAC users**
- **People who need or use AAC**
- **People who cannot rely on speech**
- **People with communication access nee**
- **People using AAC**
- **Individuals who use AAC**
- Individuals who utilize AAC
- AAC communicators
- Augmented communicators
- Augmentative communication users
- Alternative communication users
- Speech device users
- Assistive technology users
- Users of assistive communication devices

It's okay if people disagree on what words are best to use. It's okay if people change their minds, too.

Our Plan for AAC Peer Support

We made a list of different ways that AAC Peer Support could be improved and increased for AAC users. These are our recommendations for a national plan to increase and improve AAC Peer Support.

The Steering Committee agreed to this report. The Consortium did everything in this project as a group.

1. **Make a Center of Excellence:** Create a center to lead AAC Peer Support activities. This center will help groups, professionals, AAC users, and their families.
2. **Have a Leadership Team:** A team of AAC users, family members, and experts should lead the center.
3. **Give Out Community Mini-Grants:** The center should help AAC Peer Support groups get funding.
4. **Include AAC Users As Experts:** Ask AAC users what they want from peer support activities.
5. **Share an Implementation Toolkit:** Make tools that can help others run AAC Peer Support activities.
6. **Include Family-Centered Activities:** Set up peer support for families and supporters of AAC users.
7. **Set Up a Peer Mentor Repository:** Make a list of AAC users who want to be peer mentors.

8. **Make an AAC Peer Support Hub:** Make a place online to find AAC Peer Support activities.
9. **Have an Online Conference:** Host an online conference on AAC Peer Support.
10. **Make an Evaluation Framework:** Make a plan to study AAC Peer Support programs. AAC users should decide on the plan.

Outcomes and Impact

Consortium members said this project was very important and positive. These are some things we are proud of:

Guidelines: We set up rules for group discussions and accessibility. These helped us have more equality between AAC users and people who speak. We will share these guidelines with others. You can read the guidelines in Appendix C on page 19.

AAC Identity: People felt empowered being part of this project. Many AAC users said the project helped them with self-advocacy.

AAC Agency: Many AAC users said the project made them feel respected. The Consortium treated AAC users as experts.

AAC Messaging: AAC users' opinions were most important in this project. This made them feel confident to speak up in meetings. AAC users said they were more confident after meetings.

Go to our website to see more things that came out of this project. Here is the link:
bit.ly/AAC_PeerSupportProject

Appendix A: Members of the AAC Peer Support Project Consortium

Core Leadership Team:

- Bob Williams (CommunicationFIRST)
- Bre Mercier, B.S. (CommunicationFIRST)
- Emily Quinn, Ph.D. (OHSU)
- endeavor* corbin
- Melanie Fried-Oken, Ph.D. (OHSU, Principal Investigator)
- Rachel Benson, MSW (OHSU)
- Sarah Fjeldstad, MSW (OHSU)
- Tauna Szymanski, J.D., M.P.A. (CommunicationFIRST)

Steering Committee:

- Jordyn Zimmerman, M.Ed, MB (CommunicationFIRST)
- Lateef McLeod (CommunicationFIRST; ISAAC; OHSU)
- Tracy Rackensperger, Ph.D. (Public Service Faculty Institute on Human Development and Disability, University of Georgia)

Consortium members:

- Adrianna Noyes, PhD CCC-SLP (University of Wisconsin)
- Allie Tasche (Autism Society of America)
- Allison Cohen Hall (Institute for Community Inclusion, Umass Boston)
- Alyssa Hillary Zisk, Ph.D. (Admin, Ask Me, I'm an AAC User; AAC Research Team Lead, AssistiveWare)
- Amy Hanreddy, Ph.D. (Professor and Chair, Department of Special Education, California State University, Northridge)
- Amy S. Goldman, MS, CCC (USSAAC)
- Amy Szarkowski, PhD (Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston)
- Anastasia Wilson (Waisman Center LEND; Headstrong Art)
- Brain-Computer Interface system participants (OHSU)
- Carrie Luce, OTR/L & Noelle Birky, MS, CCC-SP (Community Vision AT Lab)
- Chloe Rothschild (Autism Society; The Arc National Council of Self-Advocates)
- Chris Klein (ImpAACt Voices)
- Darrius Frazier (Council of Autistic Advisors (CAA); Autism Society of America)
- David Niemeijer (AssistiveWare)
- Donnie Denome (Autistic Self Advocacy Network)
- Esther Klang (Accessibility tester)
- Gloria Soto (Project AAC for ALL at San Francisco State University)
- Grant Blasko (TASH)
- Jennifer Seale, PhD, CCC-SLP (AAC Program Director, Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Jill Jacobs (National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities)

- Jill Tullman, MS, CCC-SLP (Augmentative Communication Specialist, Jill Tullman and Associates)
- jorja harper t schall
- Kevin Williams (AAC Advocate; Community Organizer; Independent Researcher)
- Kirk Behnke, M.Ed., ATP (Training and Implementation Services Specialist, PRC-Salttillo)
- Lew Golinker (Assistive Technology Law Center)
- Linda Akagi (Research Assistant, Portland State University)
- Lisa G. Bardach, MS, CCC-SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist, ALS of Michigan)
- Mary Sowers (National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services)
- Mateo Moreno
- Maura English Silverman, MS, CCC/SLP (Executive Director National Aphasia Association)
- Michael Fondacaro (USSAAC member; founder of Beyond the Chair)
- Morgan K. Whitlatch (Director of Supported Decision-Making, Center for Public Representation, Partner in the Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice)
- Otto Lana (Center on Youth Voice, Youth Choice)
- Patrick Regan (President-Elect USSAAC; ISAAC LEAD Committee; Coordinator of Activities and Events for Bridging Communities Through Alternative Communication)
- Rachel Acevedo, MPA (National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals)
- Rebecca Reese (spouse of AAC user; Aphasia Community Center, Inc.)
- Rick Reese (Aphasia Community Center, Inc.)
- Samuel Sennott, Ph.D. (Professor, Universal Design Lab Director, College of Education, Portland State University)
- Sarah Fjeldstad, MSW (OHSU)
- Sophie Korpics (Institute for Community Inclusion, UMB)
- Tamara Bakewell (Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center)
- Tawara Goode (Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence)
- Teresa Moore (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered)
- Terri Wofford, MS, CCC-SLP (Associate Lecturer with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities; Manager of the Wyoming Assistive Technology Resources)
- Thanh My Diep
- Theo Braddy (National Council on Independent Living)
- Tim Jin (CA DDS Self-Determination Program)
- Tina Moreno, MA, SLP-CCC, ATP (Speech-Language Pathologist, UCP Cleveland LeafBridge Alternative Education Program)
- Tori Gilbert, SLPD, CCC-SLP (West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities)
- Tyson Renze (Bridging Communities Through Alternative Communication)
- Vicki Casella (The Bridge School)

Appendix B: List of Peer Support Models

AAC Peer Support Project bit.ly/AAC_PeerSupportProject
AAC Research Learning Communities AAC Social Portland State University
American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) Summer Internship Program aapd.com/summer-internship-program
ACES Program Temple University disabilities.temple.edu/news/2025/01/aces-communication-program-ramps-2025
ALS of Michigan (1: ALS support group, 2: Lectures, seminars, presentations 3: Support for patients and family, 4: Support for caregivers, 5: Bereavement support) alsofmichigan.org
Alanon/Nar-Anon nar-anon.org/find-a-meeting
Aphasia Community Center AAC group chat aphasiasarasota.org
Aphasia Support groups aphasia.org
Ask Me, I'm an AAC User facebook.com/groups/456220758119314
AssistiveWare AAC zoom chats (AssistiveWare's private adult AAC users community)
AssistiveWare AAC Users Community Facebook group facebook.com/groups/192898234141275
Augmentative and Alternative Improvisation (private group led by a Consortium member who is an AAC user)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) Autism Campus Inclusion (ACI) Academy autisticadvocacy.org/aci
Bridge School Self Determination Program selfdetermined.bridgeschool.org
Bridging Communities Through Alternative Communication (BCTAC) bridgeschool.org/outreach/bctac
Camp ALEC campalec.com/home
Camp Chatterbox facebook.com/p/Camp-Chatterbox-100064405853508/
Camp Communicare, LLC.

facebook.com/AACcommunicare; aaccommunicare.com
Camp ImpAACT-Ellis Center elliscenter.org/camp-impaaact
Camp McYack jcisd.org/special-education3/camp-mcyack
Camp SPEAK AAC (1: children 2: parents of children) campspeak.org/
Camp TALK camptalk.org
Cancer Support Community Greater Philadelphia cancersupportcommunity.org/
Children's Hospital Colorado (1: First Steps Camp, 2: Talking with Technology Camp) childrenscolorado.org/doctors-and-departments/departments/audiology-speech-learning/first-s teps-camp childrenscolorado.org/doctors-and-departments/departments/audiology-speech-learning/camp
Communication Access Connect disabilityvoicesunited.org/interchange/communication/communication-access-connect
Community Autism Peer Specialist (CAPS) Program phillyautismproject.org/community-autism-peer-specialist-caps-hub/
Community Vision (1: AAC Social Group, 2: AAC Play Group ages 0-5) cv-atlab.org
Family to Family Health Information Centers mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/f2f-health-information-centers
ImpAACT Voices (1: Virtual Hangouts, 2: In-person events) impaactvoices.org
ISAAC online chats isaac-online.org/english/news/pwuaac-online-chats/
Jill Tullman and Associates AAC Peer Support groups (1: Preschool and school aged, 2: young adults) aac-therapy.com
Let's Talk Communication Access Initiative letstalkinitiative.org
Ohio University Sparkles Cheerleading facebook.com/OHIOSparkles
Oregon Family Support Network ofsn.org
Parent to Parent p2pusa.org/

Peer-Mediated Learning vkc.vumc.org/assets/files/resources/psiPeermedstrategies.pdf
PRC-Salttillo employment prc-salttillo.com/careers
PRC-Salttillo Toastmasters AAC Club toastmasters.org/Find-a-Club/07990786-prc-salttillo-toastmasters
Rainbow Kids familyconnectionsc.org/rainbow-kids
SHARE Cancer support sharecancersupport.org
SHIBA - Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance shiba.oregon.gov
Tele-STELLA ohsu.edu/oregon-center-for-aging-and-technology/stella-family-studies
Traditional Healthcare Workers - Peer Support Specialists oregon.gov/oha/ei/pages/about-traditional-health-workers.aspx
USSAAC awareness committee ussaac.org/about-us/committees
USSAAC Speaker Connection speaker.ussaac.org

Appendix C: Guidelines for Discussions and Accessibility

Guidelines for the Prioritization of AAC Users in Group Discussions

Developed for the 2024-2025 AAC Peer Support Project Virtual Consortium Meetings

- **Schedule meetings at least two weeks in advance** whenever possible. Share agenda, meeting topics, and any questions to be addressed in the meeting to participants at least a week in advance so people have time to prepare responses.
- **Accept that there will be pauses**, and lean into any discomfort you might feel while people are preparing messages in real-time.

Most AAC users communicate more slowly than people who can use speech fluently. Continuing to speak while an AAC user is typing disrupts their concentration and often results in the conversation moving on before they have a chance to contribute.

- **Pause to ask whether anyone has additional thoughts** before switching to new topics. We recommend around a minute.

Because of the time it takes to construct responses, AAC users may be forced to react to meeting topics at a later time, such as via e-mail or a prepared message at the next meeting. This practice doesn't enable collaboration or participation in productive discussion and decision making or sharing points of view. Being sure to pause gives AAC users the opportunity to indicate they have something to add before moving on.

- **Take time to learn and look for individual signs that a person might want to contribute** to the conversation. Not everyone can nod, raise a hand, or otherwise gesture that they want to speak, and the raise hand or reaction features in virtual meetings are not accessible to all. If it's not clear whether a meeting attendee is preparing a response, one might ask something like, "Are you typing?" or "Are you composing a message?" Also, be aware that mute/unmute and other virtual meeting functions are not accessible to all.
- Groups may offer the opportunity for participants to **share their preferred communication style** (e.g., chat, SGD, speech) or describe their cues that they wish to speak. Be mindful that some consider this additional communication a tax on their time and energy. This should be offered as an option, not a requirement.

Other accessibility considerations for the group include whether there should be audio descriptions of people/slides, whether folks should say their name before commenting, and are there specific content warnings people need.

- **Offer multiple means of giving input** (email, survey, chat, instant message, etc.) whenever possible, and invite input before and after meetings. Asynchronous communication permits AAC users to take their time to formulate their responses.
- **Assign a dedicated chat reader.** Many people are not physically able to use chat, or it may be too challenging while managing multiple screens. Participants who rely on Chat for message generation should have their message read aloud. Participants should include a note if they don't want their message read out loud, for example, "Don't ROL."

Whenever possible, chat readers should read messages in order or provide context for the message they are reading. For example, refer to a previous message when reading a response: "Tom is responding to Jerry's comment about friendship, and he says..."

- **Offer support.** Zoom has many features for meeting participants. We've condensed instructions for some of the most helpful features into this document [W Zoom Meeting Participant Controls.docx](#) (up to date as of 2024). Tell participants how and to whom they may communicate any other access needs they may have before, during, and/or after the meeting.

Virtual meeting hosts should take time to learn Zoom accessibility features like captions and interpretation to provide support to participants as needed and ensure the meeting flows smoothly. We prioritize the perspectives of AAC users. We will seek AAC user input first.

- A discussion moderator will be selected. Speaking people will raise their hands (physically or using the Zoom feature) and wait to speak until called on.

If a discussion goes off topic, or if a speaking person is taking up too much time, the moderator will notify them first by private chat, then aloud. We can put these topics in a "parking lot."

- **Access flexibility** is key, which means an accommodating spirit and willingness to adapt to the needs of the group members. Accessibility measures for one person can be insurmountable barriers to others. Groups should prepare for these inevitable tensions and adjust as much as possible.

For additional tips on meeting with AAC users, please see:

<https://communicationfirst.org/best-practices-for-online-meetings/>

Meeting Roles

- Managing multiple duties in virtual meetings is challenging. Roles that meeting facilitators/hosts should consider assigning include: developing an agenda, managing a waiting room, introducing agenda topics at the start of the meeting, reviewing group guidelines, leading discussions, reading chat messages aloud, moderating discussions, sharing a screen, note taking, timekeeping, providing in-meeting accessibility support.