

Design Document 1 - Vinaya Kulkarni

Background Information and Important terms:

AAC: Augmentative Alternative Communication involves all modalities of communication, including low-tech communication boards, gestures, as well as high-tech options such as the use of **Speech-generating devices** (SGD) for communication. In the therapy world, SGD and AAC are most often used interchangeably.

Defining learners of this project: This learning module is designed for **Communication partners** (CP) of adults with acquired communication disorders who are learning to use AAC devices.

Adult users of AAC come from all walks of life. The main difference between children with communication disorders due to congenital deficits and adults with acquired communication disorders is that adults are learning ways to modify or adapt to new ways of communicating with limited or no verbal speech. They don't necessarily rely on the device for learning literacy skills or may not have educational goals. Thus, the support they need from CPs is different from the support needed by pediatric clients. Examples of acquired communication disorders in adults include Aphasia following stroke, loss of speech following TBI, Parkinson's disease, and ALS.

Following an unfortunate medical event, once the patients are diagnosed with a communication disorder impacting their ability to use verbal communication, they undergo speech therapy evaluations. After jumping through hoops to get device funding approved by the insurance companies, the patient is finally issued an AAC device. At this stage, the family members are clueless about how to proceed once the device is delivered and the patient is home from rehabilitation/ hospital stay.

This training is designed for communication partners (family members, primary caregivers, spouse, and so on) who are at this stage/phase: The device is home, patients are attending outpatient speech therapy and taking the device with them. Beyond this, the device sits idle, eventually facing device abandonment, and patients are at risk of being left with limited communication for the rest of their lives. While speech therapists as SMEs recognize the value of CP involvement, they may or may not be proactive in investing time in CP training due to several reasons such as having a large patient caseload. However, if the communication partners reach out to the professionals with specific objective expectations and show up with a plan to get involved then it will help both the professionals and the CPs thus yielding better success with communication for the AAC user.

Project Overview:

- This learning module is designed for communication partners of adults who are learning to use AAC. I will deliver this 1-hour face-to-face workshop as a guest speaker at a local short-term rehabilitation facility. The speech therapy department at this facility organizes monthly free educational workshops for families and patients. Video recording of this workshop can be used by treating SLPs, device representatives or any AAC related organization after seeking my consent.
- This project is SME driven. I consider myself subject matter expert in speech therapy and AAC use. Although, the concept is SME driven, the purpose is patient and family empowerment through family education and involvement. I am a big believer that the patient and their family are real experts, and we are facilitators or mediators helping them adapt to the situation. The autonomy that comes through knowledge and involvement allows for better services, better use of resources and better success with communication which is fundamental human rights. Thus, this project is intended to provide communication partners with knowledge and tools in helping their loved ones adapt to AAC.

Gap Analysis:

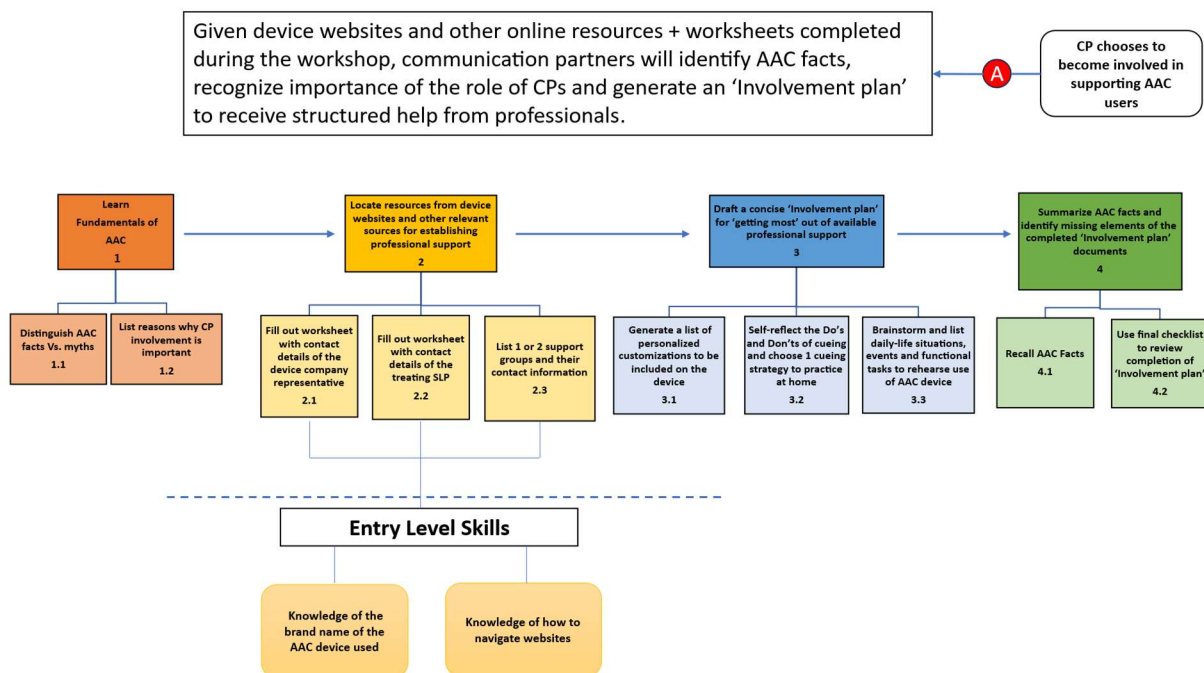
Desired Status -	Actual Status =	Need
Communication partners (e.g., spouses, family members of adult clients using AAC devices) are informed about the facts and potential of speech-generating devices in the process of communication. They understand their role/ importance of their involvement in the successful use of SGD, and they feel confident in supporting communication using SGD in a variety of functional settings.	Communication partners have significant knowledge gaps and misconceptions about AAC devices for communication. This disparity in awareness and expertise among communication partners of people using SGD causes missed opportunities, inconsistent support, and high rates of device abandonment.	A workshop for communication partners of adult clients using AAC devices: 1. To address common misconceptions about the use of AAC and its impact on communication, 2. To teach communication partners how to use tools and resources in identifying ways for improved involvement, 3. To provide a roadmap of concrete steps and strategies for becoming supportive communication partners for people using AAC devices in a variety of functional settings and situations.

Instructional Goal:

Given device websites and other online resources + worksheets completed during the workshop, communication partners will identify AAC facts, recognize importance of the role of CPs and generate an 'Involvement plan' to receive structured help from professionals.

1. **Learners:** Communication partners of adults adapting to AAC.
2. **What learners will be able to do in performance context:** Generate a concrete 'Involvement plan' to get the most out of their interactions with AAC professionals.
3. **The performance context during which the skills will be applied:** therapy sessions and other interactions with AAC professionals/ experts (speech therapists, brand representatives)
4. **Tools:** device websites and other online resources + worksheets/templates completed during the workshop.

Creation of Goal Analysis Diagram:



Main Steps and Subordinate skills leading to the Goal.

1. Learn Fundamentals of AAC.
 - 1.1 Distinguish AAC facts Vs. myths.
 - 1.2 List reasons why CP involvement is important.
2. Locate resources from device websites and other relevant sources for establishing professional support.
 - 2.1 Fill out worksheet with contact details of the device company representative.
 - 2.2 Fill out the worksheet with contact details of the treating SLP.
 - 2.3 List 1 or 2 support groups and their contact information
3. Draft a concise 'Involvement plan' for 'getting the most' out of available professional support.
 - 3.1 generate a list of personalized customizations to be included on the device.
 - 3.2 Self-reflect on the Do's and Don'ts of cueing and choose 1 cueing strategy to practice at home.
 - 3.3 Brainstorm and list daily-life situations, events, and functional tasks to rehearse the use of the AAC device.
4. Summarize AAC facts and identify missing elements of the completed 'Involvement plan' documents.
 - 4.1 Recall AAC facts.
 - 4.2. Use final checklist to review completion of 'Involvement plan'.

Entry Skills:

1. Knowledge of the brand name of the device used by their loved one.
2. Knowledge of how to navigate websites independently.
3. Some learners may already have knowledge of the contact information of the treating SLP for scheduling purposes.

IDer Reflection:

- **So far on this project what has gone well?**

My instinctive response is 'nothing!!!'. But I am at an age and stage of life where I trust the process. So, I would say, what has gone well is the fact that I am able to follow through the process and while clarity is not yet achieved, I am starting to join pieces together very gradually. I have been able to narrow the focus on my learning module to keep the goal measurable.

- **So far on the project what has been a challenge?**

Again, I want to say 'everything!' But in more specifically distinguishing the skills to be learned vs the tasks to be completed in the learning module, vs the content of the learning module. The clarity on those 3 things is elusive to me!

- **Describe what you learned from the peer feedback process? Which suggestions where you able to implement? Which suggestions did you decide not to address and why did you make that choice?**

The peer feedback process has helped me see how others are perceiving the project goals and have helped me narrow down my main steps. The suggestions I have used are related to use of verbs describing skills the learners will learn instead of listing tasks they will complete.

The suggestion I have not implemented was that I combine use of device websites to find support groups instead of having the learners use other websites. I decided to not implement this suggestion, because having access to more than one source for finding support groups is important.