

Communication Definitions

Accommodation Services – Accommodation services are any change in the way things are typically done that provides an equal opportunity to an individual with a disability. Accommodations may include but are not limited to interpreters, translators, captioning, large print, Braille, etc.

American Sign Language (ASL) - A formal language with its own semantics and grammar, originating in the US and used also in English-speaking parts of Canada. It is a language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, but with grammar that differs from English.

Artifacts, Tactile Cues, and/or Objects of Reference - A concrete physical object or texture that is used to represent a person, place, object, or activity. The artifacts, textures, and objects are individualized to the person using them.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) - AAC means all the ways that someone communicates besides speech. “Augmentative” means “to add” to someone’s oral speech such as gestures, pictures, or a communication board to make a message clearer. “Alternative” means to be used “instead of” speech. AAC incorporates all the tools and strategies a person can use to communicate when they are not able to use speech. Often, AAC is broken into 2 groups: Unaided AAC and Aided AAC. Unaided AAC does not require an aid or tool beyond a person’s own body and can include facial expressions, body language, and sign language. Aided AAC uses tools or materials and can be light-tech (like a paper communication board) or high-tech (like a speech generating device).

Braille - A form of written language for people who are blind. Letters and symbols are represented by patterns of raised dots that are felt with the fingertips.

Communication Access Realtime Translation – Also known as CART, real-time captioning, and human captioning. CART is a service performed by a hired professional.

Communication dictionary – A person-specific document that helps communication partners learn about an individual's unique behavioral signals, signs, etc. to interpret them correctly, and respond to the communicator's intent in a way they will understand.

Communication Partner – The person with whom someone is communicating. They can help make the conversation more successful, inclusive, and effective for everyone.

Communication Passports - A person-centered document that describes the individual's most effective means of communication, drawing information from past and present from many people who know the individual. The passport is carried by the individual and shared with communication partners.

Eye Gaze - Looking at an object, person, or artifact for an extended period to communicate an interest or desire for interaction with that object, person, or artifact.

Foreign Sign Language - Any sign language originating in another country (i.e., British Sign Language, French Sign Language, etc.). These are different languages than American Sign Language that are unique to each country.

Haptics/Touch Cues - A tactile sensation that represents an incoming signal received by the somatic system, or a relationship between tactile sensations which can be used to infer a higher level of information (e.g., visual, environmental, or emotional information can be provided through touch).

Individual – A person registered with an Administrative Entity; enrolled in a waiver program (Consolidated, Community Living, P/FDS or Adult Autism Waiver); or who receives base-funded services, Targeted Support Management, or services from facilities that must comply with 55 Pa. Code Chapters 2380, 2390, 6400, 6500, or 6600.

Individual Support Plan (ISP) – A coordinated and integrated description of person-centered activities, including services and supports for an individual.

Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) - Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

Interpretation - Interpreting is the process of conveying English in grammatically correct American Sign Language or another language such as Spanish and vice versa. Interpreters maintain the role of a facilitator of communication rather than the focus or initiator of communication.

Paralanguage - The non-lexical (not words) component of communication by speech, that adds meaning to what is said (e.g., tone of voice, speed of speaking, hesitation noises, gestures, and facial expressions).

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) - A specific system with a protocol for teaching expressive use of pictures to communicate. The protocol includes six phases of teaching and official program materials. **Pidgin Signed English (PSE)** - A grammatically simplified combination of ASL and English originally developed by hearing individuals who become deaf or hard of hearing during adulthood. The main difference between PSE and Signed Exact English (SEE) is that PSE mainly follows ASL sentence structure such as the dropping of determiners, suffixes, and articles but is signed in English word order. SEE has its own set of accepted signs for all parts of English including determiners, prefixes, suffixes, and articles.

Print Systems – Print Systems are used to support the development of communication either instead of or alongside text, speech, sign language, or objects of reference. Print systems are typically less complex than PECS, are homemade (not a part of the PECS official program materials) and may be meant for individuals who have some degree of

vision loss. Symbols can vary from concrete (such as a real-life picture of a house to represent “home”) to abstract (such as an arrow representing “up”).

Provider – The person, entity, or agency that is contracted or authorized to deliver a service to the individual.

Service (paid caregiver or agency) – An activity, assistance, or product provided to an individual that is paid through a program administered by ODP (Consolidated, Community Living, P/FDS or Adult Autism Waiver programs; State plan; base-funding). Service includes Supports Coordination (Targeted Support Management or base funded SC services), and vendor goods and services, as well as services provided through an organized health care delivery system, agency with choice, or vendor fiscal/employer agent financial management services model.

Sign Language – A general term describing any type of gestural communication in a visual-spatial modality.

Signed Exact English (SEE) – A system of manual communication that strives to be an exact representation of English vocabulary and grammar. It is not considered a language of its own but a manually coded form of English.

Speech - How sounds and words are said. Speech includes articulation, voice, and fluency.

Spoken Language – A language produced by articulated sounds; a systematic means of communicating using sounds. This includes all spoken languages such as English, Spanish, Chinese, etc.

Support (unpaid caregiver) – An unpaid activity or assistance provided to an individual that is not planned or arranged by a provider.

Supports Coordination Organization (SCO) – An entity that delivers Supports Coordination (SC) services through the Consolidated, Community Living, P/FDS, and Adult Autism Waivers; Targeted Support Management (TSM); or base-funded SC.

Symbol Systems - Symbol Systems are used to help people with complex disabilities, including those who are DeafBlind, to understand what is being communicated to them, to anticipate an event or activity, to express themselves, and to make choices. Types of symbol systems include objects of reference, symbolic objects, photos, pictures, line drawings, and written text that can be used independently or in conjunction with other communication methods, as part of a total communication approach. Many definitions in this document are considered part of the general category called “symbol systems”.

Tactile Sign Language - A common means of communication used by people with both a sight impairment and hearing loss (DeafBlindness), which is based on a sign language or other system of manual communication. "Tactile signing" refers to the mode or medium, such as signing using touch.

Visual Gestural Communication (VGC) - A method of communication that provides a means of bypassing vocabulary and strict grammar rules of a language, and instead involves gestures, facial expressions, and body language use and analysis.

Voice Output Device (or a speech generating device) - Electronic Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with severe speech impairments, enabling them to audibly communicate.