



**BUILDING YOUR
COMMUNICATION
TOOLKIT AS A FIRST
RESPONDER**

AAC
on the beach

ABOUT US



WHAT DO WE DO?

- trainings
- low -tech communication boards

AAC
on the beach

Welcome to AAC on The Beach! Our organization was founded in 2023 by Nicolette Contella, a speech-language pathologist who was inspired by her experiences as a junior lifeguard coach and director. While in graduate school, Nicolette recognized the need for a program that provides augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) services to individuals with communication difficulties in a beach and emergency setting.

At AAC on The Beach, we strive to make communication accessible for everyone. We believe that communication is a basic human right and that everyone deserves the opportunity to express themselves in a way that is meaningful to them. We also have a special place in our hearts for first responders, including policemen, firemen, and emergency medical technicians. We recognize the important work they do every day and are committed to supporting them in any way we can.

Our team of highly trained professionals includes speech-language pathologists and teachers. Thank you for considering AAC on The Beach as your partner in communication. We look forward to working with you and helping you achieve your communication goals.

WHAT IS AAC?



DEFINITION

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to an area of research, clinical, and educational practice. AAC involves attempts to study and when necessary compensate for temporary or permanent impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions of individuals with severe disorders of speech- language production and/or comprehension, including spoken and written modes of communication.

WHO USES AAC?

**DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES AND
GENETIC CONDITIONS
(E.G., AUTISM, DOWN
SYNDROME,
CEREBRAL PALSY.)**

**ACQUIRED
DISORDERS (E.G.,
TRAUMATIC BRAIN
INJURY, STROKE,
DYSARTHRIA.)**

**PROGRESSIVE
DISORDERS (E.G.,
PARKINSON'S
DISEASE, MOTOR
NEURON DISEASE,
AMYOTROPHIC
LATERAL SCLEROSIS.)**

**COGNITIVE-
COMMUNICATION
DISORDERS (E.G.,
DEMENTIA, APHASIA)**

4 PHASES OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

MITIGATION

- any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening
- occur before & after emergency
- example: purchasing flood insurance

PREPAREDNESS

- plans that are made
- occurs BEFORE
- example: evacuation plans, stocking food/water

RESPONSE

- actions that are taken to save lives & prevent damage
- putting your plan into action
- occurs during emergency
- example: seeking shelter

RECOVERY

- actions that are taken to return to normal
- possibly getting financial assistance
- occurs after emergency

AAC AS A FIRST RESPONDER

car accidents

crisis/trauma

post stroke

lost child

cannot describe
where the pain is

foreign language

take case history

children living with
elderly
grandparents who
have an
emergency

house fire, flood
etc

AAC IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

MIGITGATION

engaging in training
regarding
communication

making low tech
communication boards

PREPAREDNESS

having materials and
resources in your toolkit

learning how to use
communication boards

AIDED VS. UNAIDED

UNAIDED

- gestures
- body language
- facial expressions
- manual signs
- sign language

AIDED

- external support
- low tech
- high tech

BENEFITS OF AAC



enhance expressive & receptive language



decrease frustration



increase self confidence



gather information

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AAC



current levels of language



recognition of symbols



motor skills



cognitive level



language spoken

LOW TECH AAC

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

**GESTURES &
BODY
LANGUAGE**

**EYE GAZE /
EYE BLICK**

**STATIC
COMMUNICATION
BOARDS**

**PEN &
PAPER**

GESTURES

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

PROS

- no extra equipment or materials needed
- can be used a variety of environments

CONS

- can become a round of 20 questions
- need some physical/motor ability
- can only be used in the here and now



EYE GAZE

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

PROS

- good for individuals that have motor concerns
- easy to implement if they are laying down
- quick answers

CONS

- can be difficult to understand
- can become just yes/no game

OPTIONS FOR YES/NO

- once/twice
- fast/slow
- up/down
- right/left

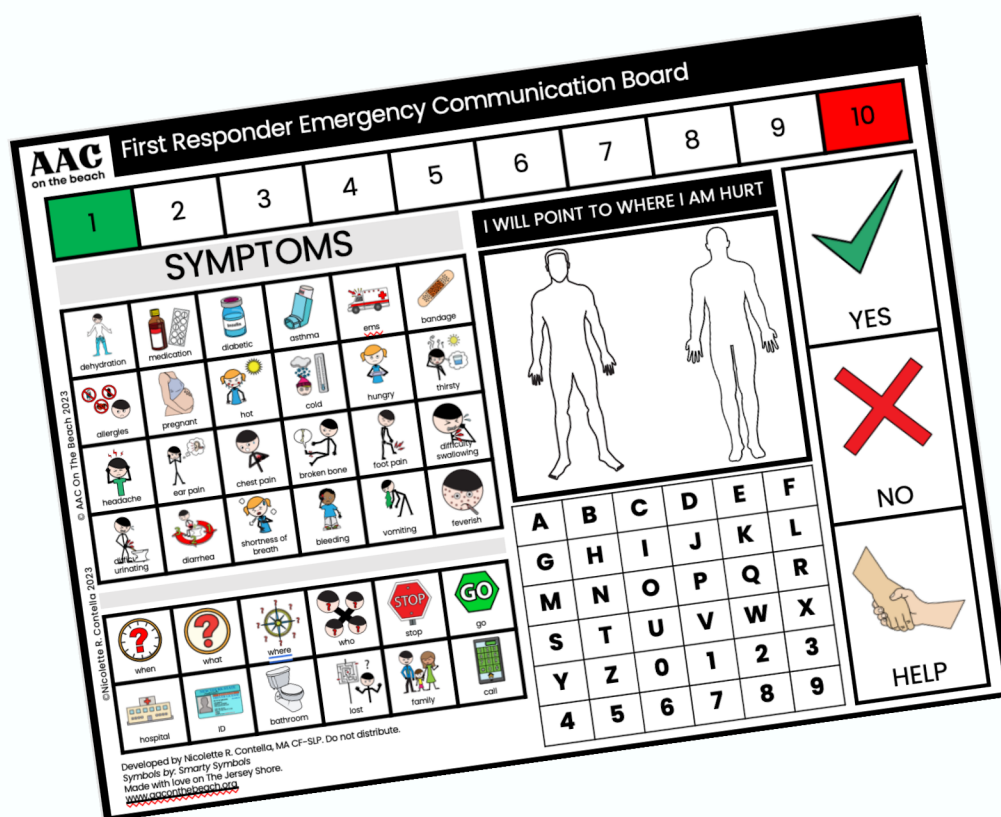
SYMBOL BOARDS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

PROS

- portable
- easy to use
- small
- understood by children and adults

CONS

- requires a communication partner
- select vocabulary
- no voice output
- children/adults might not be familiar with symbols



ALPHABET BOARDS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

PROS

- portable
- easy to use
- small
- understood by children and adults

CONS

- requires a communication partner
- requires literacy/ knowledge of spelling

PEN & PAPER

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

PROS

- portable
- easy to use
- small
- understood by children and adults

CONS

- requires literacy/
knowledge of
spelling/words

ADJUSTING THE WAY YOU SPEAK

HELPFUL TIPS

- ✓ make eye contact
- ✓ position yourself in front of the person
- ✓ use facial expressions
- ✓ use gestures
- ✓ slow down
- ✓ use short, simple sentences
- ✓ ask yes/no questions
- ✓ provide wait time

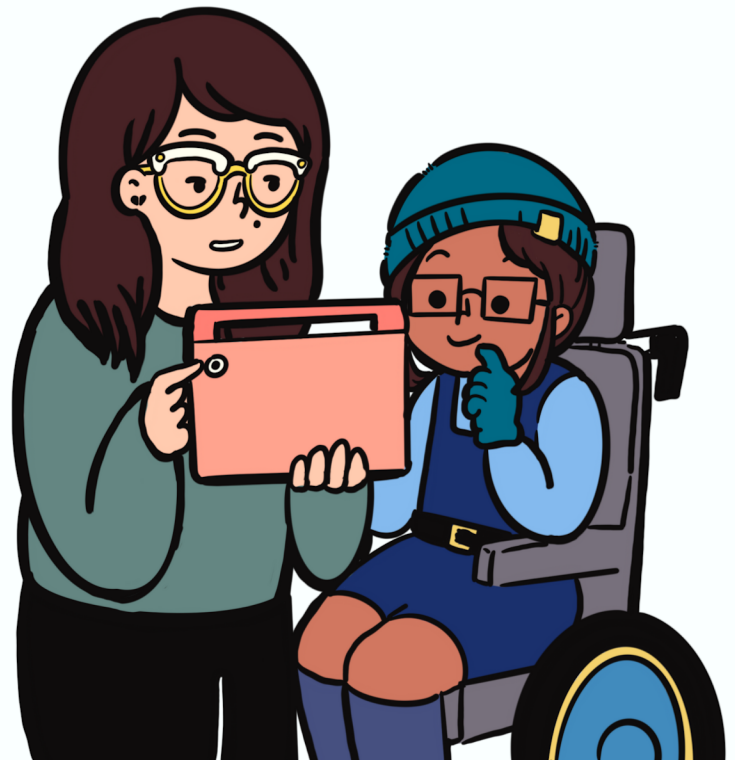
PARTNER ASSISTED SCANNING

HOW TO:

1. Offer choices first
2. Cycle through options
3. Ask for an affirmative response (verbal speech, head nod, eye blink etc)

PROS

- good for those with motor difficulties
- no requirement to point



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Schedule a free comprehensive
training today!



CONTACT US

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DISCLAIMER

- This guide is meant to serve as a jumping-off point to implementing communication strategies as a first responder.
- This does not replace comprehensive training.
- You may not use this resource for commercial purposes.