

RK Rimandeep Kaur

ACS Online Orientation(PDF)



TVCC provides Augmentative Communication Services – or ACS – for families of children and youth to support their face-to-face and written communication needs.

Overview

WHAT IS AAC?

Definition

AAC Myths

ACS at TVCC

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Family and Caregivers

 Thinking About Access

STAGES OF SERVICE

 Service Delivery Overview **Discovery** **Assessment** **Training** **Practice** **Self-Reliance**

TIMING

 Is ACS the Best Fit Right Now?

FUNDING OPTIONS

 Funding for Devices

CONCLUSION

 What's Next? **Resources** **Thanks**

Overview



Rimandeep Kaur

This document is an offline orientation for the Augmentative Communication Services, provided by TVCC formerly Thames Valley Children's Centre.

This is the PDF version, which is less interactive than the online version (no navigation buttons or navigation menu, videos are links instead of embeds). We recommend that when accessing videos, you right-click on links to select "Open in new tab" OR copy and paste video links to a separate browser window. This will keep you from being redirected away from this PDF and losing

TVCC provides Augmentative Communication Service (ACS) for families of children and youth to support their face-to-face and written communication needs. This course is primarily for families and caregivers of children/youth who have been referred to the Augmentative Communication Service team at TVCC and it must be completed to proceed with assessment.

Goals of this course:

- Explain Augmentative Communication
- Describe what happens during ACS services
- Outline your role as a caregiver in this process

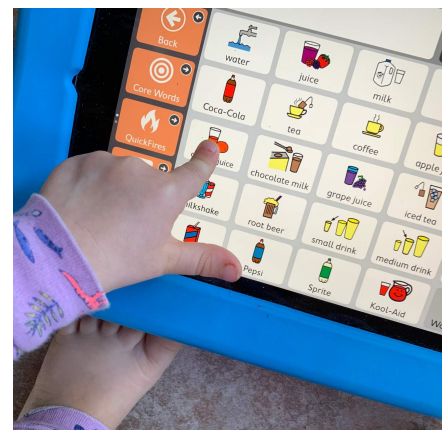
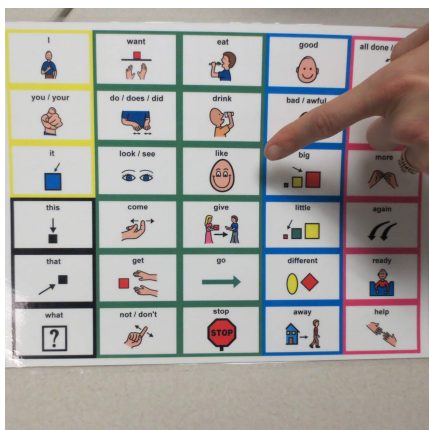
Definition

RK Rimandeep Kaur

Augmentative & Alternative Communication

AAC is any approach designed to temporarily or permanently support, enhance or supplement the communication of individuals who are not independent verbal communicators in all situations.

Individuals can use many different ways to communicate including vocalizations, gestures, signs, photos or symbols and electronic communication devices.



Here is a fun video to get us started.

In this video, 4-year-old Ethan uses his communication device to have an amusing conversation with his siblings at the table.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7WgRVEPW0g>

AAC Myths



Rimandeep Kaur

Myth:

AAC will interfere with speech development.

Some people think that if you introduce an AAC system to a child it might hinder their natural speech abilities. However, this is not what has been found. There are decades of research to support that using AAC often helps to further verbal speech development.

AAC will not keep your child from learning how to talk . Instead, it will help the child learn about words and language. The use of an AAC system allows for language to continue to develop beyond what can be said verbally.

For some children, an AAC system is something that they will use during their entire lives. Other children use AAC to learn about language before they eventually learn to speak clearly.



Myth:

People who use AAC will stop using their speech.

AAC tools and strategies enhance an individual's ability to communicate with all partners in any environment.

People who use AAC will not stop using their speech if and when they are able to and if they are understood. If there are situations where their speech is not understood AAC can be used to help them get their message across.

People naturally choose the easiest way to get things done. If someone has the verbal skills, they will choose to say words rather than finding the AAC device, pressing buttons, and opening folders to find words to complete their thought.

Every way you look at it, having an AAC system helps the child.



ACS at TVCC



Augmentative Communication Services

What does ACS do?

- ACS supports children and youth to develop their face-to-face and written communication skills.
- ACS provides assessment and consultation services for children and youth up to their 18th birthday who are unable to communicate effectively through speech or writing.

The ACS team is made up of:

- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Therapy Assistants
- Technologists

The team works closely with clients and their families, other involved therapists and educators to develop the best strategies.



ACS covers the Southwestern Ontario Counties of Middlesex, Elgin, Huron, Perth, Grey, Bruce, Oxford and some clients in Kent.

In Kent county TVCC will see clients with more complex needs and direct access clients are seen by the Children' Treatment Centre of Chatham Kent.



ACS is an Expanded Level Clinic with Assistive Devices Program(ADP) of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

This means our clinicians can prescribe communication devices and/or mounting for individuals who meet ADP's eligibility criteria for funding assistance.



Funding assistance through ADP is either to purchase or lease a recommended communication device.

If both options are available to you, ACS clinicians will explain the advantages and disadvantages of each to help you decide the best option for your child.



ACS clinicians can prescribe a wide range of augmentative strategies, including technology to support face-to-face and written communication and these items can be purchased or leased for home and community use.

Many clients use their communication devices at school; however devices cannot be funded for school use only. There must also be a need for them to be used at home in order to meet the ADP funding guidelines.



ACS will not provide one to one speech and language therapy to children or youth. We provide consultation to family and in the community.

Family and Caregivers



Rimandeep Kaur

Your role

Family and caregivers have the most important role on the team and are necessary to participate in all stages of ACS service delivery. **Your commitment and active participation is crucial to help your child/youth reach their full potential.** ACS team's goal is to empower and support families so they can be their child/youth's best teacher and advocate.

First, we will need you to identify all the team members that will be important to support your child. You will be a primary facilitator to support your child long term. There are others including teachers, educational assistants and therapists whom we also want to also include in this process.



You will also be involved in the assessment, goal setting, and play an important role in the decision making process. Once a communication solution is chosen you will be provided training, and help with ongoing maintenance of the system.



You will be provided with information about how funding will work and may be responsible to pay for some portion of the recommended system.



You will provide ongoing opportunities for your child to communicate and practice.

You will be important in continuing to develop communication goals as well as the ongoing training of new professionals once ACS is no longer involved.



Thinking About Access



Types of Access

There are many different technologies available which can help children and youth to be able to access a communication system.

Direct Access

This means using a body part or pointer to activate a message. This could mean pointing with a finger or even with your eyes.



Indirect Access

This is used if your child is not able to point directly to symbols or use a computer keyboard. Indirect access is using a switch to activate a specific message or control a scan when direct access is tricky.

mother. She has had this device for one year.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mSUacNLic0>

When it is tricky for someone to point with a body part there are other options like scanning. Examples of indirect access are single switch scanning and partner assisted scanning.

In this video, a 5-year-old uses both. She uses a switch to start a scan on the device. Options on the device are highlighted one by one. When she gets to the one that she wants, she hits her switch with her head to select it. Afterwards, her mother uses partner assisted scanning to assist her in answering a question.

<https://youtu.be/eNy35Qd4CC0>

Service Delivery Overview



Rimandeep Kaur

There are 5 phases in the Augmentative Communication Service at TVCC:

DISCOVERY

ASSESSMENT

TRAINING

PRACTICE

SELF RELIANCE



Discovery



Rimandeep Kaur

What is included in the Discovery Phase?

You will receive a **Discovery Call** from a clinician to find out more information about your child and answer questions that you have.

This will be a 30-45 minute call to learn about your child's communication and determine what the best next step for your child is. They may give you more information and ideas of things to work on while you are on the waiting list for a full assessment or to help your child become ready for a re-referral to ACS.



Sometimes a clinician will suggest a **Discovery Consultation**. This may be a virtual visit or in person. This visit may include your child and you will bring any communication tools they are currently using. It is important for other team members to attend this session such as their teacher, Educational Assistant, Speech-Language Pathologist and any other team members who would be helpful in supporting your child's communication.



There are also some additional Education Modules that are available free on the TVCC website. These will help you while you are waiting for additional service. You can find a link to our eLearning Modules page in the resource section of this course.



Augmentative Communication Orientation

(Online learning module) Learn what augmentative communication is all about, what to expect and what's involved with this service.

[Read More ->](#)



Core Words

(Online learning module) Learn what core vocabulary is, how it's different from fringe vocabulary, key characteristics of core vocabulary, why using core vocabulary is so important and how to teach core vocabulary.

[Read More ->](#)



Expanding Communication with Symbols

(Online learning module) Learn what expanding communication is all about, how to do it and why it is important in supporting your child's communication development.

[Read More ->](#)

After you've completed the discovery phase and our service is the best next step, your child's name will be added to the list of children waiting for a full ACS assessment.

Assessment



Rimandeep Kaur

Starting the Assessment Process

When an ACS clinician becomes available, they will contact you to arrange a **team meeting** at your child's daycare or school.



Together with you and your child's team we will talk about your child's communication needs and will develop some clear **communication goals** for your child.

With your child's goals in mind, ACS clinicians can begin a **trial of strategies and equipment** with your child, to determine which will be the best fit for your child and family.

The entire assessment phase can take approximately 3 months and sometimes longer when needs are very complex.



If your child would benefit from specific equipment to improve their expressive communication, the process to get **funding** from the Assistive Device Program will begin.



Please note...

Assessment may also determine that a high-tech system is not the best fit for your child at this time. Other strategies or more robust (expanded) low-tech system may be found to best meet your priorities and your child's communication needs.

As a final review before submitting for funding your ACS clinician will share the decision that you have made about the best fit of communication methods and devices at an ACS team meeting.

This is a regular meeting of ACS clinicians who review each equipment authorization to ensure consistency and appropriateness of applying for government funding.

The suggested equipment will be reviewed by the ACS team and then the equipment authorization can be made to apply for funding.

Government funding through the Assistive Devices Program is reviewed at the end of this module.



Following this review, a communication system will be ordered and TVCC will work with you to create and implement a **treatment plan**.



Training



Rimandeep Kaur

Who Does What?

All clients will have at least one **facilitator** identified who is able to take on responsibilities for the communication system. Most often that is a parent or caregiver or someone who remains consistent in child's life.

The role of the facilitator is very important in the success of a child using a communication device.



In the **Training and Practice phases**, ACS will teach the facilitators about how to use the communication device or system and increase its functionality as the child grows.

We will also evaluate whether this system is meeting the child's needs and whether communication goals are progressing.



The facilitator will learn how to use the system and teach others how to use it with their child.

As the facilitator practices and consolidates their skills, becoming more independent, support from the ACS team will decrease.



Facilitators will learn how the tool works:

- How to turn it on / off, change the page, charge it, clean it, etc.
- How to program messages.
- How to save messages and create a back-up.
- How to customize the system so that what the user wants to say is available when they want to say it.

Facilitators will learn how the tool is used:

- How to use it for communication, which makes it easier to teach others (this is called functional training).
- Teach your child and others how to use their device and how to find words/messages.
- Teach your child and others about the elements of communication, for example how to initiate, maintain a conversation, continue an interaction, change a topic, and so on (happens best in everyday situations).
- Teach facilitators how to be responsive to communication attempts made by your child.

Teaching your child to use the device and how to find words and messages is very important for success. This includes having the facilitators and other communication partners talk to the child by using the device themselves or modeling how to use language.

To learn more about modeling communication, see our online learning module, [Modeling Communication with Symbols](#) (linked in the resource section of this course).



We will teach you how to integrate voice output on a speech-generating device with other methods of communication, such as gestures, pointing, body-language or facial expressions.

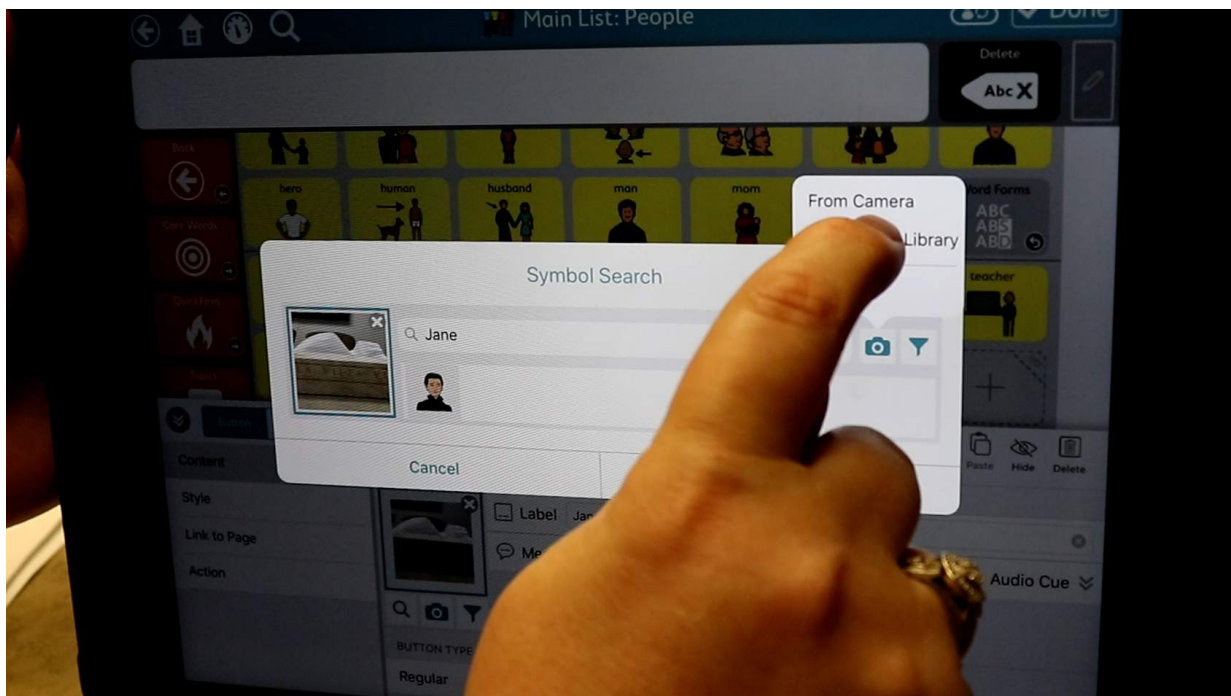
Another example would be using a speech generating device along with speech, a low-tech or paper-based communication system.



It will be necessary to teach the child and other facilitators, for example school personnel, how to keep the system up to date and relevant.

This might involve changing and adding vocabulary or making new pages – changing the vocabulary symbols to be more relevant to the child's needs.

Together, your ACS clinicians and you as your child's facilitator will help to teach the child's communication partners about how to best communicate with the child using the device.



Once facilitators have been provided with the skills necessary to integrate the child's augmentative communication system, our team will take a step back. The child and their team can have time to practice using the system throughout the day!

Practice



Rimandeep Kaur

During the practice phase teams become more independent. Once facilitators have been provided with the skills necessary to integrate the child's augmentative communication system, our team will take a step back. The child and their team can have time to practice using the system throughout the day!



As the child continues to work towards the goals, the facilitator will contact ACS clinicians when questions or needs arise regarding the communication system.

This includes when new needs arise, when goals change, and/or when assistance is needed in forming new goals.

ACS provides support for the technology and checks in with your family to see if the system is working and meeting your child's needs.



In this video, Libby practices using her iPad while reading Mortimer with teachers.

<https://youtu.be/LIHwqS6p1KY><https://youtu.be/LIHwqS6p1KY>

Self-Reliance



Rimandeep Kaur

Prior to the self-reliance phase, ACS helps to develop skills and strategies to prepare families to work toward communication goals successfully and independently.

Leading up to this final phase, **the goal is to have families feel independent** and no longer in need of ACS support.

During this phase the child's team sets their own goals with no ACS clinician involved.



Be sure to check in with your other SLP and OT regularly for more **ideas on what to work on next.**



Families who are leasing devices will be contacted yearly regarding their **device lease renewal**.

Families who have purchased a device will be discharged and can be re-referred if new communication needs arise.



Of course, if the need arises you may contact the ACS Program Assistant at any time by calling extension x58774 or by emailing acs@tvcc.on.ca

The Program Assistant can help access technical support for a broken device or trouble shooting.

Reassessment can be requested if a device no longer meets your child's needs and there are new needs identified.

If a full reassessment is needed, please note that there may be a wait for available clinicians.

In such an event, a different clinician may be assigned.

Reassessment through ACS is available up until your child's 18th birthday.

Is ACS the Best Fit Right Now?



It's important to consider whether ACS is the best fit for your child and family, at least right now.

ACS goals are not more important than any other goals and sometimes your current circumstances may not allow a full commitment to this process.

For example, if your child is changing schools the transition might be too distracting to focus on communication right now.



Other examples might be more pressing matters such as health issues, or other financial commitments like a major home renovation.

If any of these examples or others apply to you, we encourage you to consider deferring your involvement with us until a time that is better suited to your family.



If you need assistance with finding alternative services let us know and we can assist in re-directing you and your family.

If you discontinue services, and decide they are needed in the future, you can re-refer at that time.

Children can be at different levels of communication and have different needs. High-tech communication devices are not always appropriate or necessary for all children.

We will provide you with the strategies that will best meet your child's and family's current needs.



If you change your mind while waiting let us know.

You can always make another referral. If you get to the top of the list and there's something going on so you can't participate at that time, we can put your child on hold for up to 6 months without losing your spot on the list.

If at any time after today, you decide that you don't wish to pursue augmentative communication with us, please contact our Program Assistant at (519) 685-8700 ext. 58774 or e-mail us at acs@tvcc.on.ca

Funding for Devices



A Brief Overview of Funding

Purchase

If purchasing an augmentative communication device, **ADP pays for 75%** of the cost.

Parents/caregivers are responsible for taxes and 25% of the cost.

However, if families are eligible for social benefits like Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the parent portion **may be** covered, not including any applicable taxes. To qualify, it must be the **child's** ODSP. Some children may qualify under their parent's ODSP or Ontario Works.

Some communication devices and systems are able to be leased.

Lease

If leasing, **parents pay 5%** of the value per year up to a maximum of \$1000.

After a device has been leased for 5 years the family owns that device.

If families are eligible for ACSD, ODSP or OAP the parent portion of the lease **may be** covered, not including any applicable taxes.



Help may also be available from service clubs, insurance, and so on.

If seeking help from service clubs, parents must apply each year for leasing costs.

Families also must submit proof of ACSD or ODSP coverage yearly to cover leasing costs.

If proof of benefits or service club funding is not received, then families are responsible for the annual cost.



To learn about eligibility and how to apply for additional funding, please visit.

What's Next?



Rimandeep Kaur

Please fill out the form below.

<https://forms.tvcc.on.ca/251124989637973>

We look forward to working with you and your child. Have a look at this last video for a few laughs.

AAC Awareness Month 2020



Resources



The document below is a summary of the service phases covered in this module. Click on the file to view or download the document, **Augmentative Communication Service with Chart.pdf**



Augmentative Communication Service with Chart.pdf
452.5 KB



The following links will direct you to some of our other online education modules from ACS.

ACS Resource Padlet

Check out our AAC resources all in one spot! “TVCC Resources”, “Intro to AAC” and “Modelling” are most relevant for caregivers in this module.

<https://padlet.com/acs39/aac-resources-h1einfvab6bdf3hw>

Core Words

This free electronic learning module provides you with an overview of core vocabulary. The module covers what core vocabulary is, how it's different from fringe vocabulary, key characteristics of core vocabulary, why using core vocabulary is so important and how to teach core vocabulary.

<https://www.tvcc.on.ca/caregivereducation/core-words>

Modeling Communication with Symbols

This free electronic learning module will teach you to use modeling. The module explains what modeling is and why it is important in helping to develop your child's language and communication skills. The module will cover topics including Language Development, Aided Language Stimulation, Modeling Tips and Reasons to Communicate.

<https://www.tvcc.on.ca/caregivereducation/modeling-communication-symbols>

Expanding Communication with Symbols

This free electronic learning module will teach you what expanding communication is all about, how to do it and why it is important in supporting your child's communication development.

<https://www.tvcc.on.ca/caregivereducation/expanding-communication-symbols>

Shared Reading

This free electronic learning module This free electronic learning module will teach you about shared reading and how to get the most out of reading with your child who uses AAC.

<https://www.tvcc.on.ca/caregivereducation/shared-reading>

If you missed filling out the confirmation form on the previous page, you can access it here:

<https://forms.tvcc.on.ca/251124989637973>

Thanks



Rimandeep Kaur

Thanks! for completing this orientation!