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Assistive technology to promote community integration

Melissa K Trovato and Lauren R C Tooley
Kennedy Krieger Institute, USA

Individuals with developmental disabilities frequently have communication needs and require the support of a Speech-Language Pathologist. A portion of these children and adults will also require use of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) devices to allow them to not only communicate their basic needs but to also improve social interaction at home and in their community setting. Furthermore, AAC devices often help support spoken speech and provide a model for speech production. Numerous devices are available ranging from low tech to cutting edge. Technological advances are yielding very few limitations to physical access of AAC devices at present and may include eye gaze, proximity switches, and use of key-guards. Selection of the appropriate device is crucial for successful use. An evaluation by a SLP familiar with AAC and devices is necessary to assess for appropriateness of use and device choice. Follow up visits for training and customization are necessary. Carryover of use in the home and school should be reinforced. Funding for devices varies by state, insurance company and school district. We will review several types of AAC including multiple modes of access. Additionally, we will discuss funding and basics for referral.

Biography

Melissa K Trovato, MD is board certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine. She is an Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. She is the Director of Inpatient Rehabilitation at the Kennedy Krieger Institute, where she has worked for 14 years.

Lauren R C Tooley, MS, CCC-SLP is an ASHA certified Speech-Language Pathologist who has worked in the field for nine years. She is the Manager of the Assistive Technology Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, MD. She conducts Assistive Technology Assessments for adults and children with developmental and acquired disabilities who may need assistance with environmental controls, augmentative and alternative communication devices, executive functioning, and written expression.

trovato@kennedykrieger.org
Tooley@kennedykrieger.org

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