

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE  
in Developmental  
Disabilities

**Freedom to Communicate**

All people have the right to:

- Express
- Request
- Be heard
- Reject or refuse
- Be acknowledged
- Interact with dignity

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

AAC tools and technologies give a voice to all through:

- Unaided communication systems that use the person's body:
  - Movement
  - Sign language
  - Gestures
- Aided communication systems that require the use of tools and the person's body:
  - Paper and pencil
  - Picture/photograph systems
  - Computers/electronic devices

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**When communicating with an AAC user, remember to:**

- **Ask** the person how he or she wants to communicate.
- **Be sincere.** Say you do not understand, if you don't.
- **Speak** directly to the person.
- **Listen.** Silence is golden.
- **Observe.** Watch for all methods of communication. Assume competence.
- **Respond.** The person likely understands you, even if not able to reply.

**Not being able to speak does not mean you have nothing to say.**

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