



Alberta Aids to Daily Living

Speech generating communication devices: Guide for selecting a device

Introduction

This guide is designed to help clinicians working with clients and families during the speech generating communication device (SGCD) assessment process.

Funding for communication devices is provided for individuals who meet Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) eligibility criteria and who demonstrate the ability to use the selected system effectively and independently for communication purposes. Communication needs include face-to-face communication and electronic forms of communication.

Levels of communication competence

The following communication skills should be demonstrated in order to be eligible for speech generating communication device funding through AADL. Refer to [Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS – Speech generating communication devices](#) to identify which category of devices is suitable for the client.

Context-dependent communicator 2

- intentionally uses a device for communicative purposes beyond requesting wants and needs
- communicates daily with 50 or more words/phrases
- vocabulary may be word or phrase-based
- may use custom pages organized by activity/theme/environment
- may benefit from visual scenes to provide context
- may be starting to use core vocabulary
- may have category knowledge
- may have beginning literacy skills, but they are insufficient for purposes of communication
- may benefit from modeling and/or context related prompts
- access skills are consistent and accurate

Context-dependent communicator 3

- uses a device for communication purposes using a variety of communicative functions (requesting, commenting, asking/answering questions, commenting, providing information)
- actively participates in interactions
- initiates conversation
- maintains a conversation beyond two turns
- uses core vocabulary
- benefits from grammatical indicators
- requires access to extensive vocabulary across many categories
- literacy skills are developing or are sufficient for purposes of communication
- independent/unprompted use of device (access and communication)
- modeling may be used to provide user with language and communication supports
- identified need for specific features/language set available on specific device/model is high priority
- access skills are consistent and accurate

Independent communicator

- able to communicate independently with any partner on any topic

- may need support to develop operational, social or strategic communication skills

Note on emerging communicators

AADL recognizes that everyone has the capacity to communicate. The method of communication may vary based on the skills and abilities of the individual and the communication partners in the individual's environment.

Emerging communicators may be in the process of developing communication skills, but the results are not reliable or consistent enough to support expressive communication through symbolic language. Emerging communicators typically do not have physical access and/or the cognitive/language skills to use aided augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems listed in Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS – Speech Generating Communication Devices. Emerging communicators may rely on non-symbolic communication methods such as gestures, movement, no-tech and unaided AAC systems and knowledgeable communication partners.

Devices

Refer to [Alberta Aids to Daily Living Approved Product List AS – Speech generating communication devices](#) for specific devices in each of the following categories:

Catalogue No. A400 – Alphabet-based devices

A400 devices are typically used by context-dependent 3 to independent communicators with these preferences and skills:

- prefers to use writing to create messages
- sufficient literacy skills to create a message for communication purposes
- access skills are consistent and accurate with physical (chiclet) keyboard versus touch screen version
- may use features to increase rate of communication such as word prediction, abbreviation expansion, pre-stored words and phrases

Catalogue No. A402 – Simple static display devices

A402 devices are typically used by context-dependent 2 communicators who use customized printed displays and have these preferences and skills:

- uses device with intention for communication purposes
- uses limited number of communicative functions (labeling, requesting)
- custom pages organized by activity/theme/environment
- vocabulary may be word or phrase-based and represented by pictures or photographs
- benefits from modeling and context related prompts
- may not navigate across pages

Catalogue No. A406 – Dynamic display devices

A406 devices can be authorized for context-dependent 3 communicators and independent communicators. These communicators are able to combine words and phrases to create unique messages with multiple partners. They benefit from using the additional features available for communication.

Catalogue No. A407 and A408 – iPad-based devices and Surface touch bundles

A407 and A408 devices may be used by context-dependent 2, 3 and independent communicators.