

## **Aids For Communication**

### **By Julia Pearce**

We often talk about people with an IDD who are non-verbal, who use gestures and vocalizations to communicate, who have beginning expressive language skills, and those who can speak about preferred topics, and answer questions in context of a current situation but may not be able to tell us how they feel or what they need. All of these could be examples of limited verbal skills in a person with IDD.

When a person with an IDD has limited verbal skills, additional communication supports could be considered. This is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication/AAC. AAC can be unaided or aided.

You do not need anything but your own body to use unaided systems. These include gestures, body language, facial expression, and sign language. An aided system uses some sort of tool or device. There are two aided systems – basic and high tech. A pen and paper is a basic aided system. Pointing to letters, words, or pictures on a board is a basic aided system. Touching letters or pictures on a computer screen that speaks for you in a high tech aided system. (ASHA <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/>)

It can be daunting to make a decision about which system or device could be beneficial when we consider the many systems that can be used for AAC. There are two resources in Utah you can contact to support the AAC decision making process. The first is the Utah Assistive Technology Teams/UATT. The Central Office for the UATT is located in Salt Lake City, and can be contacted to find the local team leaders in each area. These teams work in all the school districts, are available to students in the public education system from ages 3 – 22 years old, and can be a resource to the IEP/504 team members. <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/services/uatt.html> will lead to the contact information for the Central Office.

The second resource is the Utah Center for Assistive Technology/UCAT. This office serves people with disabilities across Utah with any disability, any age, and with any need. They are also located in Salt Lake City, with Assistive Technology Specialists who are able to talk, and meet, with individuals about their needs. More information about their services can be found at <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/services/ucat.htm>